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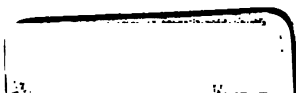
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OLD TRINITY

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

By T. MASON JONES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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OLD TRINITY.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A WELCOME SURPRISE.

No victor in the Olympic Games advancing to receive his crown—no Roman conqueror climbing the Capitol in triumph—no hero, hailed with acclamations by his applauding countrymen, ever felt happier than did Mark Butler on his journey home. Tom went with him to the terminus and saw him off. The brothers bade each other an affectionate farewell, with many times repeated good-byes, and God-bless-you's. The train soon attained its full speed, and the green fields and telegraph poles were whirling past; but as Mark sat in the carriage looking out at the window, he saw them not.

His thoughts were busily engaged elsewhere. He was dwelling on the pleasant fact that he had three hundred pounds sterling in Bank of Ireland notes and gold in his pocket. And if every pound had been magnified into ten he could not have felt richer than he did at that moment. He was picturing Hogan's surprise when he saw that he had the money, and arranged in his own mind that he would pay him in a careless manner, as if he had been accustomed to that sort of thing. He was making up little speeches for his mother, to deceive her for a while, asking if she would go to America with him, and painting in the most forcible colours to her the impossibility of doing any good in Ireland; and when he saw her looking at him piteously, and entreating him not to take her away, but leave her to sleep in the churchyard at home, as she would not be here long, he was to burst out upon her with the glorious news that she was going—not to the churchyard—but to live with him at The Beeches; and, as she turned pale, and would

not believe him, he would take her in his arms, and kiss her, and assure her it was the fact—and that it was all owing to Tom.

He was describing Tom's success to her, and telling her all about the money, and the grand acquaintances he had made, and of his intended visit to Ballyluce Castle—to people even grander than the Carews. Then he was to take out the newspapers and read Tom's articles to her, and comment upon them as he went on—and he would lend them to the doctor and Father Brady—and, as the climax of it all, he was to tell her to sit down in the arm-chair after tea, and he would read aloud the article from the London Review, and when he had finished, ask her 'Who wrote that?' and before she could have time to reply, he would cry out, 'Why, Tom—our Tom wrote it!' And they were to have another crying and kissing match together. And the thought so affected him that he could scarcely see the carriage window through his tears.

In the mean time the train sped on, or

stopped at the different stations ; and passengers got out and in, without Mark's notice. The bells rang, and the whistle from the engine screamed, but Mark heard them not ; he was listening too intently in imagination to Minnie Young's low musical voice, as he told her the story of his love, and humbled himself before her, and besought her to come and live at The Beeches with him, and crown his life with its greatest blessing ; and she whispered him that she would think of it, and that he was a fond, foolish old Mark, but that she would try and be good and make him happy ; and the doctor gave his approval and blessed them, and Mark was happy. And Minnie wondered if Tom would blame them very much for thinking of it ; but Mark assured her that Tom was almost as anxious for it as himself ; at which Minnie winced a little, and thought of the old, old days at Middlemount and her little romance there, with a sigh ; but she was resigned.

And Tom would come to stay with them at The Beeches and make it his home ; of course

he would. Who had as good a right to it as he? And Mark would get the old surgery fitted up for him as a study, where he could read without being disturbed, and restore the flower-garden to all its former beauty. It had been sadly neglected of late, but Mark would soon repair it and make it more attractive than ever. Perhaps Tom would marry a rich, grand wife, and bring her to see them; and would not Mark prepare a reception for her and kill the fatted calf, and strew the loveliest flowers in her path?

Then his thoughts took a more practical turn. He would not allow Larry Doolan to dictate to him any longer in the management of the farm. Larry had sometimes set up his back against him and thwarted his plans, insisting that he (Larry) knew more about farming than Mark himself, and for quietness' sake he had submitted, but he would do so no longer. At The Beeches he would turn over a new leaf, and take things altogether into his own hands. Larry was a good judge of stock, and could make a better bargain at a fair than

he could ; but still he would be his own master ; and if Larry presumed to oppose him, he would send him about his business.

And so Mark formed his plans. He would avoid tillage : the climate was not suited for it. Grasses and green crops would bring him in the best returns—let them grow corn in the climates where they had no rain for months, but in a weeping climate, like Ireland, cereals were too great a risk, therefore he would turn his attention to the dairy and the stall. His expenses for labour would be less, and his profits greater ; and, with a little care and energy, he would soon be independent of seasons and landlords. He went over every field on The Beeches and resolved what he would do with it : this required draining, that subsoiling and liming. Salt would improve this portion ; soot and ashes another. And by the time the train stopped at his destination, and the railway porters shouted out, ‘ Junction ! Junction ! Roscrea Junction ! ’ and disturbed Mark from his reverie of two hours-and-a-half

duration, he had most carefully resolved upon what to do with every inch of his new possession. For, although he had not yet made any agreement with the owner, he had looked upon himself all the day as Hogan's successor in The Beeches.

A feeling of apprehension seized him as he saw that individual at the station with a roll of papers in his hand. What if he had disposed of the farm to some one else? But his fears were groundless; for Hogan handed him one of the printed papers, which proved to be a bill announcing that on such a day the stock, standing crops, farm implements, household furniture, and interest in the lease of the well-known farm, The Beeches, would be sold by public auction, if not previously disposed of by private contract, &c.

'I am almost inclined to take the place off your hands, Mr. Hogan,' said Mark. 'What is the lowest sum you will take for your lease?'

'Not a shilling less than three hundred pounds, Mr. Butler.'

‘Two hundred and fifty down would not tempt you, I suppose?’ Mark inquired.

‘I wouldn’t take two hundred and ninety-nine pounds nineteen and elevenpence. The auctioneer and surveyor both tell me I should get more, but as I offered it to you for three hundred, I won’t go back of my word.’

‘Then I think I’ll take,’ said Mark.

‘I’m glad of it. I’d rather you had the place than that anyone else should get it. You have the best right to it. And you should see what heart the land is in. Jump on this car, and come with me and look over it,’ Hogan rejoined.

Of course Mark knew every inch of The Beeches, but he could not resist the invitation to go over the place again. He felt an irresistible inclination once more to walk the fields of which he might now consider himself the master.

‘I need not tell you what the land is,’ said Hogan, addressing Mark as they bowled along the road. ‘You know more about it than I

do ; but this I will say, that excepting your own place at The Grove, a kinder bit of land, and a more comfortable house, no man need wish for. You left it in good condition, and it's not worse now than it was then. Only I am going to the County Down to the farm the old man has given me, I'd never leave The Beeches.'

Poor Mark's heart quite fluttered as he caught sight of the old familiar house, with its low thatched roof, through the trees. It was to be his home again, and he owed it all to Tom. Everything looked beautiful in Mark's eyes. The fields of wheat, and oats, and barley, were forward and luxuriant, and would soon be ripe for the sickle. The after-grass was so grown already as to promise another crop of hay. The pastures, on which the cattle and sheep were lazily browsing under the summer sun, never looked greener. Even the trees Mark thought had grown wonderfully since he saw them last, only the flower-garden looked neglected, and the dwelling-house

somehow wanted that air of neatness which it possessed in days of yore.

‘There’s a field of wheat for you!’ said Hogan. ‘If it be a fine season, and the weather keeps on like this, ’twill yield from twelve to fifteen barrels an acre, every acre of it; and look at the straw, six feet high if it’s an inch.’

‘I have no objection to take the standing crops from you at a fair valuation,’ said Mark, ‘only I cannot pay you till after the harvest.’

‘With all my heart, Mr. Butler; I’ll leave the valuation to yourself. Whatever you think fair will satisfy me. You’ll want the straw for fodder and manure. Take your own time about the payment. Christmas-day, or Easter Sunday, will be time enough for me,’ Mr. Hogan rejoined.

‘Thank you very much,’ Mark answered. ‘It will be better for you to appoint one valuator, and I’ll name another; we will abide by their award. If I valued the crops I might lean to my own side you know.’

But Mr. Hogan knew better. And, although his proposal seemed generous enough, it was the very best he could have made for himself; for he knew that if Mark consented to undertake the valuation the balance would incline to his, Hogan's side, and not to Mark's.

It was almost evening by the time the memorandum of agreement was drawn out and signed by Mr. Hogan and Mark, and all the particulars of the bargain arranged.


'I may as well give you a couple of hundred pounds on account, Mr. Hogan,' said Mark, pulling out his pocket-book, and rather proudly displaying his roll of bank-notes, as he proceeded to count them: 'I know I am safe in dealing with you.'

'For that very reason, Mr. Butler, not one shilling,' rejoined Hogan, whose respect for Mark, however, was greatly increased by seeing him in possession of such a 'pile of money,' as he afterwards described it to his wife. 'There are two bad pays in the world—those that pay beforehand, and those that

never pay at all. You must belong to neither class. If you think you are safe in dealing with me, I know I am equally safe in dealing with you. When the transfer of the lease is completed, it will be time enough for you to pay; and not even then, if the money be any convenience to you. I don't want it.'

Mark could only reiterate his thanks, and declare that he would rather pay the whole of the purchase-money at that moment, but it was there ready for him any time. He would be easier in his mind if it were paid on the transfer of the lease being executed; to which, Hogan, after some persuasion, at length consented.

It so happened that Doctor Young and Minnie, knowing that Mark had gone to Dublin, and that Mrs. Butler was alone, and perhaps low-spirited at the prospect of Mark's losing The Grove, had driven over from Middlemount after dinner to see her, and had been prevailed upon by the good lady to stay for tea. The conversation turned chiefly on Tom, and Mark's prospects of getting another farm; and



although the good doctor did his best to cheer the widow, and Minnie was unceasing in her efforts to comfort her and make her forget her trouble, they had not succeeded very well, and were silently sitting down to tea, when Mark drove up to the door on Hogan's outside car.

They were greatly surprised to see him. His mother most of all, for he had told her when leaving, the day before, that he might not return for a week, or more. 'What had brought him back so soon?' she wondered. Mark did not leave them long in suspense. If they were glad to see him, he was equally delighted to see them. And dear Minnie was there too. What an unexpected pleasure that was! He thought he should find his mother alone, that Minnie and the doctor should be with her was an additional pleasure.

He flew first to his mother, and kissed her, then he shook hands with Minnie, and was going to kiss her, too, but he drew back a little afraid, and then he covered his confusion

by shaking hands with the doctor. All the little plans of surprise he had formed in the railway carriage were forgotten, and he blurted out his good news in a moment.

‘Oh, mother, I have such good news for you!’ he cried out, without any preface. ‘Doctor, my dear doctor, congratulate me,’ shaking the doctor’s hand again. ‘And, oh, Minnie, I am so happy—I am so happy!’ And he told them breathlessly all that had taken place. Mrs. Butler listened with varying colour to Mark’s rapidly-told story, and when he concluded, she removed her spectacles, exclaiming,—

‘Mark, my dear, what is it all about? I don’t understand. I am getting old and stupid. Tom—three hundred pounds—purchase of lease—Hogan—the crops—we to go live at The Beeches! Tell me again, my dear, my head is all in a whirl.’

‘It is all true, mother darling,’ Mark answered. And he told the whole story again with greater minuteness than before, dwelling circumstantially on all the details, and painting

the transaction with Hogan in the very brightest colours. 'It is all true, mother, every word of it. Minnie, here is a copy of the agreement with Hogan, signed and all. I have got the farm and the crops from him, and Tom has given me the money, Minnie, and we are to go and live at The Beeches in a fortnight, mother;' and, as she was sinking back into her chair in a great burst of weeping, Mark caught her and kissed her, again and again. Then he turned to Minnie, and this time kissed her too. 'Dear Minnie,' he cried, 'just think of it, we shall not have to go away after all. Doctor, my dear friend, we shall be nearer to you at The Beeches than we are here.' And the old doctor pulled out his silk handkerchief, and wiping his eyes, exclaimed solemnly, 'Let us pray.' And they knelt down, and the doctor prayed, a solemn, reverent, humble, grateful, joyous prayer, that was accompanied with sounds of weeping, and in the British Isles there was at least one sincere grace before meat that evening.

They had just risen from prayer, and were drying their eyes, and Minnie was nodding and smiling at Mark, and trying to make believe that she had not been crying, when Peggy Dunne came into the room with a dish of steaming hot pancakes. No sooner was Peggy made acquainted with the state of affairs, than she set up her joyful outcry, opening her eyes very wide, and then putting the corner of her apron to them, she shouted aloud,—

‘Back to The Beeches! And lave The Grove at onst. Wisha no! oh, tare-an-ages, Masther Mark, are you in airnest? Meilla murther! The divil abit of meself ever liked the same Grove at all. The saints about us! And we are to go there at onst, ma’am. And the dairy! Oh, thanks to the Blessed Vargin! Now we may snap our fingers at Carew, and all his breed. It’s they has the black dhrop in ’em, sir, saving the doctor’s presence, but lave it on the neck of his sowl, sir. Glory be to God! Lave it on the neck of his sowl, Masther Mark, but I must go tell Larry,’ and she danced out of the room.

Minnie poured out the tea that evening at Mrs. Butler's urgent request. And, as they discussed the pancakes, Mark entertained them with a long and interesting account of Tom and his doings at College.

'There was never such a brother,' Mark said; 'so wise, so learned, so good. Only that we know him so well we might think he would be forgetting us amongst all his grand acquaintances. But there is no danger of that, is there, mother? Is there, Minnie?'

'Ah, my darling boy,' Mrs. Butler answered. 'May God bless him! My poor child!'

'He is going on a visit to Sir Arthur O'Neill's, when he comes home. Their Castle is the grandest place in the County Limerick. Lady O'Neill was up in Dublin with her son, who was sick, last week and took the greatest fancy to Tom,' Mark added, 'and insisted that he should spend part of the vacation with them. Young O'Neill and Tom are as thick as brothers. There is a Miss O'Neill, too, the celebrated beauty and an heiress.'

‘Ah,’ Minnie thought, as she heard this, ‘there is some danger of my being forgotten!’ And she heaved a faint sigh of regret as she remembered the past.

‘Besides,’ Mark continued, ‘he has been writing for the newspapers. I have them all with me. And it’s writing for the great London Reviews, he has been. Here is the last number with one of his articles. That’s the way Tom makes his money. And oh, doctor, I had almost forgotten, he sent you a Greek Testament that’s just come out, with best love and all kind remembrances. It’s in my portmanteau. I will get it out now while I think of it.’ And Mark gave the delighted doctor the volumes.

The latter remained in the house talking to Mrs. Butler, turning over the pages of the review, and examining the Testament, while Mark lured Minnie to the garden, under the pretence of looking at his flowers. She looked at the flowers and admired them, and talked carelessly to Mark about Tom and The Beeches,

and congratulated him on his good fortune in becoming Hogan's successor. Mark told her about his plans ; and, although he forgot every word of the speeches he had made that morning in the railway carriage, he plunged abruptly into the subject, and taking Minnie's hand in his, asked her if she would now consent to make him happy, and let him call her his own ? Minnie held down her head and murmured something in reply, and whatever her answer was, she did not say 'No.'

Round and round the garden they walked watching the setting sun. Poor Mark's happiness was too great for utterance. And if Minnie remembered with regret another scene that took place nearly four years ago at Middlemount, the night before Tom went to College, and the indignant vows she had made on that occasion to herself that she would never, never love anyone but Tom, and yet had forgotten them, and was now loving Mark, was she so much to blame ? Is she the only young lady who, unable to obtain her first love, consoles

herself with a second? Is love's first young dream ever realized on earth? What's the use of crying for the moon? And if Minnie could not get Tom, where could she find so true a heart to love her as that which beat in poor Mark's breast?

It was late before they started for Middlemount, and when Mark went into the kitchen to order round the doctor's horse, he found Larry Doolan dancing a hornpipe, and Peggy Dunne singing and keeping time.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LOVE'S LONGINGS.

ON a fine July morning, the O'Neill family were again assembled in the breakfast-room at Ballyluce. They were to give a grand dinner that evening at the Castle, and were busy discussing the characters of their expected guests when the post arrived.

'Halloa,' exclaimed Bob, 'here is a letter from Butler. He is coming at last,' and as he spoke he gave his cousin Helen a significant glance, and placed an inclosure the letter contained in his breast pocket. 'He will arrive by the four o'clock train.'

'You must send the carriage for him,' Sir Arthur remarked.

'I shall go myself to meet him,' Bob answered.

‘I’ll go with you, Bob,’ Miss Helen cried. ‘It’s a lovely day for a drive.’

‘I am glad Mr. Butler is coming to-day,’ rejoined Lady O’Neill. ‘We shall be able to introduce him to some people to-night whom it may be useful for him to know.’

‘I don’t think he will care to know any of them, aunt,’ Helen replied, as she rose and left the table.

In the hall she met her cousin, who handed her Tom’s note, and she flew to her own room and locked herself in.

‘Oh, you precious, precious letter!’ she cried, as she drew the note from her pocket, and kissed it repeatedly. ‘And he is coming at last!—at last!’

She walked over to the window, and tore open the envelope impatiently. The letter was dated from ‘The Beeches the previous day; and as she read it the hot blood mounted to her neck and face, her eyes sparkled and her bosom heaved. ‘True, my love,’ she muttered, ‘this

cruel separation is about to end. I could not have borne it much longer. I shall see you again; be clasped to your heart; feel your lips on mine again to-day—to-day! Oh that you were here with me now, that I might fall at your feet, and tell you how entirely, how madly, I love—worship you!’ She looked out, and saw the white clouds floating lazily in the heavens, and the sunlight dancing on the waters of the river, but brighter was the joy that filled her heart.

Then she read over again every word of the letter, dwelling upon, and repeating softly to herself, all its endearing epithets, and as with parted lips, and face lighted up with smiles, she pronounced the impassioned phrases, her cheeks burned, her pulse beat wildly, and she trembled with excitement.

‘Oh, my darling!’ she cried as she rose, and holding the open letter in her hand, paced the room. ‘My darling, how little you know how I idolize you! Of how I long and pine for

you, and how worthless everything seems to me without you! Of the wild idolatry that I feel towards you! How cruel of you to stay away so long from me! Every hour has seemed an age, but you are coming to me at last!’

She could get no rest. She was utterly unable to control her excited feelings. She tried to work, to read—in vain. She thought the day would never pass; the morning never come; the leaden moments never go by. To while away the time she opened her writing-desk, and brought out Tom’s letters. She was familiar with them already. She had studied them so constantly by day, and thought of them so frequently by night, that she had them all by rote. Each of them had been an epoch in her life—a new revelation of feeling to her. They had discovered to her an unknown world in her own heart; opened up to her new depths of emotion of which she had not dreamed before, and given her a glimpse of Paradise. No eyes had seen them but her own. No

even to Miss Dillon did she read Tom's letters. It was an article in her creed that the letters and confessions of lovers should be sacred between themselves. His letters would be profaned if beheld by other eyes than her own.

Yet, familiar as she was with these letters, she never tired of them, but read them with greater zest and pleasure than before. Short as the time had been since she received the first of them—a little more than two months ago—what an age of feeling, and thought, and passion had been crushed into those few days! The passions that had lain so long dormant had blazed up into sudden and brilliant splendour. Her love resembled vegetation in the tropics: to-day, all barrenness and torpor; to-morrow, the air heavy with perfume, and the earth covered with blossoms, fruits, and flowers.

‘What shall I wear to-night,’ she thought. ‘I must not let any of these country ladies

eclipse me.' And she opened an old cabinet of bog-oak, and brought out an Indian casket of curious workmanship, containing the jewelry that had belonged to her mother. 'I have not worn these often,' she said to herself, 'but I will wear them to-night. He must not be ashamed of me amongst so many fair women;' and as she examined the splendid diamond and pearl necklace, and bracelets, she was thinking of the sentence, 'As a bride adorneth herself for her husband,' when Miss Dillon knocked at the door.

'Helen, my dear, I am going for a walk, will you not join me?'

'I think not this morning, dear, I am going with Bob, you know, to the railway station at two o'clock.'

'What are you doing with your jewels, my child?'

'I am just choosing what I shall wear this evening. Come, help me. Some one is coming to-day; and oh, darling, I am so happy!'

'My dear girl, you look so excited. Pray

try and calm yourself. Your feelings hurry you to such excess that sometimes I fear for you.'

'How can I help it, dear? The news that Mr. Butler is coming to-day, has put me into a fever. I cannot think of anything else. You know how much I love him.'

'I do, and can sympathize with your love. I only hope this Mr. Butler is worthy of such devotion. Very few men are.'

'Worthy! You don't know him, darling. If I loved him ten thousand times as much as I do, if that were possible, he is worthy of it all. Wait till you know him.'

'Still, Helen, we must not set our affections too much on the creature. In that case the Creator sometimes punishes the sin. He does not like idolatry.'

'You dearest old pet, you must not preach to me to-day. Let me be happy. You cannot tell how I have longed to see him and be with him once more. These stupid people coming this evening will keep him from me, when I want to have him all to myself.'

‘You must be careful, and not tell Mr. Butler all this. If you do, it will spoil him.’

‘I have told him. He knows it quite well. Nothing can ever spoil him.’

‘Ah, well, you are a devotee; say what I may, you will worship at your shrine.’

‘I am a devotee. And now tell me, dear, what am I to wear to-night?’

‘A white dress and your diamonds. You cannot be too simple. Women do not know the value of simplicity in dress.’

‘I want to look my very best, remember,’ Helen said.

‘You are quite right, my dear. It is a woman’s duty to look her best; and so to dress that she may appear to the greatest advantage. I hear a great deal in sermons about female vanity that I do not believe. Of course I do not justify waste or extravagance in dress, but I do say that a woman is bound to be particular about her appearance and looks.—To dress well, and in good taste, if she can afford it. What is she for, but to give

pleasure and look beautiful in her husband's and children's eyes ? To be beautiful and ornamental is as much the proper business and function of women as it is of the rose to smell sweetly, or of the rainbow to exhibit colours. If I had been blessed with a husband, I should never have allowed him to see me in *déshabillé*.'

'There,' cried Helen, 'what would the rector say to you ? To be sure his wife is a dowdy. You are preaching up the pomps and vanities, and I mean to do your bidding this very evening. I am detaining you from your walk, though, and Bob will be angry if I keep the carriage waiting, so I must make myself look amiable.'

'And I will come and dress you this evening for dinner,' said Miss Dillon. 'So for the present, farewell. I will go for my constitutional now. I am allowing the beautiful morning to go by.'

Helen and her cousin were at the station half-an-hour before the train arrived. They

walked impatiently up and down the platform ; and when at length the train moved into the terminus, and Helen caught sight of a well-remembered face looking out of one of the carriage windows, she clung to her cousin's arm, and remembered no more till she found herself sitting beside Tom Butler in the carriage that whirled them home to Ballyluce Castle.


She was in a kind of trance as the two friends exchanged their cordial greetings. And merely heard the words,—

‘Why, O’Neill, my dear fellow, how well you are looking.’

‘Butler, old boy, you’re welcome. Come along and let us get your traps.’

‘As neither of you smoke,’ said O’Neill, as he closed the carriage door upon Helen and Tom with a humorous look, ‘I’ll ride outside with Sweeny, and have a cigar.’

When Helen became fully conscious she found Tom’s arm around her, his lips on hers, and the horses tearing along the road towards home.



‘My darling,’ he said tenderly to her, ‘you quite frightened me ; I thought you were going to faint. You grew so pale, and your hands are cold as ice.’

‘No,’ she answered, looking fondly at him ; ‘I am quite well. But the surprise at seeing you, after such weary, weary waiting, overcame me. Dearest, I am so glad you are come.’

In going to the station, Helen, in her impatience, thought the journey would never end, and kept urging the coachman to drive faster. Now, in her enjoyment of Tom’s society and conversation, how rapidly they got over the ground, and how she wished the precious moments might be prolonged !

‘It is so provoking,’ Helen said, ‘that we have a dinner party this evening—a formal ceremonious affair to a number of the county magnates, their wives, and daughters, whom uncle is obliged to invite to the Castle three or four times a year. I want you to keep near me, and take me in to dinner.’

How many things they had to say to each

other—a thousand fond assurances to give and receive—a thousand anxious questions to ask and answer ! And, before they could get through half of them, they reached their journey's end.

Sir Arthur gave Tom a most cordial reception. Lady O'Neill relaxed her stately dignity, and was particularly gracious to him ; and Miss Dillon treated him as if he had been an old friend.

'Now, Butler,' said O'Neill, 'come along with me ; I'll take charge of you, and show you your room. You have no time to lose. We dine at seven. And he led the way across the hall, up the grand staircase, and into a large bedroom with two windows, which overlooked the Shannon.

'Here,' O'Neill added, 'are your quarters. You can watch the river as you lie in bed of a morning. My room is next to this. There's a bath-room inside with hot and cold water on. I advise you to have a bath after the heat and dust of your journey. Here's Dixon with your

traps; give him the key of your portmanteau, and let him put out your things. But first, Dixon, go down to the butler, and tell him to send me up some brandy. Bring some water with ice in it here, at once. A glass of brandy-and-water will do neither of us any harm after the dust of the road.'

'My dear fellow,' said Butler, when the man had left the room, 'I do not want anyone to attend me; I am accustomed to wait on myself, you know.'

'You may as well have him, though. The idle dog has nothing to do; nominally he is my servant, but never does a thing for me. He shall wait on you, brush your clothes, and varnish your boots; he has a famous varnish—so you must use him.'

'Now, Dixon,' continued O'Neill, addressing the servant, when he returned with the brandy and the ice, 'mind, you are to wait on Mr. Butler, and devote the whole of your energies to his service. If I find you neglect him I'll fling you into the river the next

time I catch you near it. Do you hear me?’

‘Yes, sir. I don’t want to be drowned yet awhile, any way, Master Robert,’ Dixon answered, as he glided about the room, and laughed at his master’s threat.

Left alone, Tom had time to admire the richly-furnished bedroom, the mahogany four-poster, square and solid, with its silken hangings and snowy coverlid; the wardrobes with plate-glass doors and panels; the soft carpet and tiger skins for rugs, the china service, and the mirrors on the toilet-tables; and, as he enjoyed the luxury of the bath, he could not help contrasting the elegance and comfort of O’Neill’s home with the squalor of his College chambers.

He was soon dressed and down stairs. And was admiring a marble statue of Psyche in the hall, when Helen floated down the staircase a dazzling vision of beauty, tulle and diamonds. It was Tom’s turn to grow pale, and tremble as he advanced to meet her. He had never

seen her look so bewitchingly beautiful before. Who will say that there is no magic in dress? Or what greater heresy was ever propounded against woman's empire, than is to be found in the famous saying, that 'beauty, when unadorned, is adorned the most?'

Helen wore a rich white glacé slip, over which softly hung a full skirt of tulle, looped up with pearl and diamond sprays. The low bodice fitting to perfection, and revealing her graceful neck and shoulders, was trimmed with a profusion of tulle, and on it glistened and shone a magnificent diamond and pearl stomacher. A double row of splendid pearls, fastened with a clasp of diamonds, hung loosely round her neck; and on her arms were bracelets to match. A single white rose was in her hair. A deeper colour than usual mantled in her face, and her dark eyes gleamed with a lustre far surpassing that of the jewels she wore, as she smilingly placed her hand on Tom's arm, and looking up fondly in

his face, led the way to the drawing-room, where many of the guests were already assembled.

As they entered the room every eye was bent admiringly on Helen. Even the ladies present admitted to each other how superbly she was dressed and looked. Half-a-dozen gentlemen advanced to speak to her, to whom she introduced Butler, and amongst them was Sir Bernard Carew. It never occurred to the latter that Butler was a brother of his late tenant at The Grove.

When the dinner was announced Sir Arthur was about to ask Sir Bernard to take Helen in, but she anticipated him by rising and taking Tom's arm. Sir Bernard scowled, and wondered who the deuce this man could be whom Helen so evidently favoured, nor was his good humour increased at being obliged to escort old Lady Scudamore, with whom he found himself seated opposite to Helen and Tom.

Helen noticed with indignation the furtive

lowering looks Sir Bernard directed to her side of the table, and to be revenged on him, redoubled her attentions to Tom. She smiled, and laughed, and chatted to him, and in a tone of voice every word of which was intended for Sir Bernard's ear, reminded Tom of the dinners they had cooked in College, and what pleasant days they were.

Poor Tom was intoxicated, not with wine, but with pleasure. He laughed and chatted with Helen, but was painfully conscious that his remarks were not very much to the point. He had a vague idea that he had been introduced to the Glynns, Moores, O'Briens, and others in the drawing room, and that he was now taking wine with them; but who the owners of the respective names were, he could not tell. As the servant filled his glass, and he bowed in response to Sir Arthur's invitation, he caught Sir Bernard Carew's eyes fixed on him with an expression of diabolical hatred and rage.

The dinner, like all grand, formal dinners, was a dull affair. The conversation was desultory and unconnected, and turned upon the poor-laws, the coming harvest, and the last assizes. Butler did not remain long after the ladies, but left the gentlemen at their wine, and hastened to the drawing-room.

‘Who is your friend Butler?’ Sir Bernard asked O’Neill, after Tom had left the room; ‘some College acquaintance, I presume.’

‘A very dear, and intimate friend of mine, Sir Bernard,’ O’Neill answered, stiffly.

‘Indeed! what family does he belong to? Is he any connection of the Ormonds?’ inquired the Baronet, with a slight sneer.

‘His brother rents a farm from you in Ossory, Queen’s County, at least he did,’ replied O’Neill, carelessly.

‘I had a tenant named Butler, lately,’ Sir Bernard remarked haughtily. ‘He held a small place under me called The Grove.’

‘The same,’ said O’Neill, coldly. ‘Your

tenant was a true gentleman, and an honest man. My friend is his brother.' And the conversation ceased. But Sir Bernard Carew looked grimly at his informant, and as he ate his walnuts, ground and gnashed his teeth.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

A SENSATIONAL STORY.

SUMMER in the country ! Far away from the smoke and dust and dirt of Dublin. Away amongst the fragrant meadows, with the lark singing high in heaven, and the bees bending down the honeysuckle and the thyme, and the hum of insect-life heard all around.

—Watching the cattle lazily browsing on the pastures, or reclining under the trees for shade, while the tinkling of the sheep bells alone broke the sultry stillness.

—Gazing on the motionless clouds in the motionless heavens, as the shadows fell on the green turf and on the sunny uplands.

—Amongst the dark woods, where the sunlight laughed amongst the leaves, and the black cock whirred and the wild pigeons cooed.

—On the breezy moors through the long

bright hours, with the gentle south wind fanning the blood, the wild heather in blossom, and the young grouse on the wing.

—On the river, floating with the glassy stream, while not a breath of air filled the sails hanging against the masts, seeing the boats pass up and down, and the blue skies reflected on its quiet breast.

—In the flower-garden, amongst the splash of fountains, where the roses and carnations blossomed, and a mingled perfume of mignonnette and heliotrope filled the air.

—In the hot-houses, where the luscious bunches of grapes hung from the glass roofs, and the pine apples, fresh and succulent, drank in the sunbeams.

—In the fruit-gardens, with the trees laden with purple plums and yellow pears and ruddy apples, and the juicy, mellow peaches were ripening against the walls.

—In the shaded drawing-room, during the hot hours of noon, when all Nature seemed asleep.

—In the picture gallery, cool with marble statuary, and with the sunshine of the pictures streaming from the walls.

—In the pillared hall, where the light fell in many-coloured hues through the stained glass in the dome on the mosaic floor.

—Or, on the terrace overlooking the river, by moonlight, listening to the night wind sighing amongst the trees, and seeing moon and stars, and trees trembling in the wave.—

In all these varied scenes, with Helen at his side, Tom Butler had not only the summer around him, but the summer in his soul. How swiftly the time flew by! Every succeeding day was more bright and joyous than the preceding. Nothing occurred to disturb their enjoyment. Life was one long ecstatic dream. But in the distant horizon was the little cloud of coming woe, as yet no bigger than a man's hand; and fortunately for them, they saw it not.

Sir Arthur was the most genial of hosts. He was pleased to find that Tom knew some-

thing about dogs and horses, farming and stock. He expected a mere pedant—a bookworm; and he met in his guest not only a scholar, but a clever man of the world. He could talk to Tom about politics, the state of the country, the effect of the repeal of the corn-laws, and tenant-right. On all these points Tom had opinions quite as decided as his own, nor did he scruple to express them, even when they were at variance with Sir Arthur's own.


‘I like,’ he said to Lady Julia, ‘I like the young man's candour and frankness, my dear; he has brains. And to do anything well in this world, is all a question of brains, from sweeping a crossing to ruling an empire.’

Lady O'Neill attended to her special duties, and did not take much notice of the movements of the young people. As for Miss Helen, she did as she pleased. The mornings were devoted to riding, when Helen, her cousin, and Tom cantered across the country. The afternoons were occupied in driving or boating on the river; and music or reading, with an occa-

sional dinner-party at home or abroad, filled in the evenings.

In their out-door amusements O'Neill was never in the way. Neither of the lovers could complain of want of opportunity for converse with each other. They were hours, almost days, alone together. Nor did the time hang heavily on their hands. Drunk with the divine delirium that intoxicated them, they noticed not its flight. They knew only that they were happy, and that sufficed them. In the first flush of youth, and health, and hope, and love, the 'currents of two lives were running into one.' And Miss Dillon and O'Neill were the only residents at Ballyluce acquainted with the fact.

The latter took things quietly; but Miss Dillon was becoming apprehensive about her pupil. She knew her high spirit, and that her impetuous nature would brook no opposition to her wishes. She knew, also, that Lady O'Neill would never consent to her marriage with so poor a man as Butler, especially as Sir Bernard



Carew was in the field ; for, under a promise of secrecy, Lady Julia had made her aware of his intentions. Miss Dillon feared discovery, which she knew must come, sooner or later, and she dreaded the consequences.

‘I wonder, Helen,’ said O’Neill, addressing his cousin one evening after dinner, as the three friends were walking on the terrace by the river,—‘I wonder what brings that man Carew here so often now ? He has been at the house several times since Butler came. I am glad we missed him each time. Foley tells me he was here again to-day. What can he want that he comes so frequently ?’

Helen could have given a shrewd guess as to the cause of Sir Bernard’s visits, but Tom was present, so she merely replied,—

‘You should ask uncle, Bob. I fancy he presses him to come.’

‘I cannot tell why my father should ask him,’ O’Neill answered.

‘Nor I. I only know that he does invite him. I was not aware he was coming to din-

ner the last time until I saw him in the drawing-room,' Helen said.

'I hate the man!' O'Neill exclaimed, vehemently. 'Though I cannot tell the reason why.'

'He is no favourite of mine,' remarked Helen. 'You do not dislike him more than I do.'

Tom had a pretty good idea of the motives that prompted Carew's visits to the Castle. He remembered his conversation in College with L'Estrange on the subject, and everything that he had seen lately confirmed all that he had then told him. He saw that the wealthy baronet, if not yet an avowed suitor, was really seeking for Helen's hand; and from Carew's manner to him the night of the dinner, he suspected that Sir Bernard had fathomed his secret, and hated him accordingly. He kept these thoughts to himself, however, and remarked,—

'I never saw Sir Bernard Carew but twice, once about three years ago, and then he did not see me; the second time was the evening

I arrived here. On each occasion a peculiar feeling crept over me. To say that I hated him would not exactly express my meaning. It was rather a feeling of loathing and aversion, almost bordering on terror, such as one might experience in presence of some noxious, venomous animal. I felt, as the peasantry say, "as if some one was walking over my grave." I could not account to myself the first time for the sensation. I even laughed at it as absurd, but the feeling, or instinct, or whatever it was, returned with tenfold force, when I caught his eyes fixed on my face at dinner with an expression I shall not soon forget. It was not a pleasant expression, by any means ; and I felt an aversion to him which I can neither explain nor reason away. If I were superstitious, I should be inclined to say that in some fatal manner we shall cross each other's path. But I do not see how we can come into contact. I should not like, however, to meet him in a dark corner.'

' Yet L'Estrange believes in these mys-

terious sympathies and aversions,' rejoined O'Neill. "Spiritual affinities" he calls them, and he is one of the cleverest and shrewdest fellows I know.'

'When did you hear from him?' Butler asked.

'Oh, that reminds me, I had a note from him this morning. He is at Queenstown, but will be home by the twentieth of next month. He wants us to go over to the Grange for a few days' shooting. His bogs are full of grouse; we cannot do better.'

Tom made no reply. The mention of L'Estrange's name in connection with the conversation about Carew, had excited in his mind a fresh train of thought, and that was the choice of a profession. What was he to be? Hitherto he had put the question aside as an unpleasant one that required no immediate answer. Lately he had been so swayed by the new emotions awakened in him, that he had not thought of it.

But now he saw that he must come to a



decision, and that soon. The subject could not be deferred much longer.

He was the rival—the successful rival—of a man of great wealth, and high social position, who was already a baronet, and might one day be a lord. Against these advantages what had he to show? If Helen rejected Sir Bernard's suit, as he knew she would, and that he avowed his passion, what would Sir Arthur think? What would her relations say? How would the matter look in their eyes, and how could he expect their consent? And as he asked himself the question he began to quake.

Although Helen had generously preferred him to a rich and distinguished suitor, that did not lessen his obligation to justify her choice to her friends. How could he best do so? That was the question. If their love was discovered, as it might be at any moment, he must come to an immediate explanation with Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill, and he knew well what the consequences of such an explanation must be.

The question was therefore forced upon his attention. A decision could be no longer avoided. But upon what course was he to decide? In the old College days he had repeatedly debated with himself the advantages and disadvantages connected with the several professions, and in this way he passed under review the Church, Medicine, Law, Engineering, Army, Navy, Authorship, &c., and had rejected them all in succession. He doubted too, whether he could succeed in some of them. They were not to his taste. He could not be happy in any of them. 'There was one pursuit, however, to which he could have devoted himself heart and soul—politics. The science of statesmanship—the art of ruling men. But he felt, and felt bitterly, that though he had the inclination, and perhaps the ability, he had not the wealth, nor social position, to qualify him for that pursuit. If he attempted it at present he would be regarded as an adventurer—looked upon as a scheming politician, and his pride could not bear the unjust taunt.

Helen, it was true, had the means. But what would the world say? Would he not be looked upon as a fortune-hunter? Besides, should a man owe everything to his wife—no matter how rich, unselfish, and generous she might be? Should he leave it in her power to turn round at any moment and taunt him with what he owed to her? No! There was one course open to him at the worst. If Helen's guardian should refuse his consent to their marriage, then, to prove to him that he was not influenced by mercenary considerations, he would not touch one shilling of her money. He would go to the Bar, and, hateful as law was to him, he would devote himself to it; and perhaps after fifteen or twenty years' hard labour, a political career might be opened to him; and then, having wasted the best part of his life, he might begin where the son of some lordling, without half his brains, left off. These thoughts made him silent as they walked by the river's bank, for Helen tapped him playfully on the arm and inquired, 'Now, sir, what

are you looking so sober and anxious about? You have not opened your lips this half-hour. You should not be so absent in a lady's presence.'

Tom looked at her and smiled. Instead of answering her question, he addressed her cousin:—

'O'Neill, do you remember a discussion I had with L'Estrange in your rooms a few months ago, on the choice of a profession?'

'I do well. You had the worst of the argument, too. You were beaten for once in your life,' O'Neill replied.

'Utterly. I was routed, horse, foot, and artillery. The enemy occupied ground strange to me, and, by a new system of tactics flanked me, and captured my whole force.'

'Why do you ask the question? What makes you think of the subject?'

'I have often thought of it since. I am in as great a difficulty as he was. I don't know what to do—cannot resolve what to be,' Tom answered. 'The arguments I thought so con-

vincing when I used them against L'Estrange now fail to convince myself.'

'Why trouble yourself with the subject at all?' O'Neill inquired.

'Because I must do something. When your father asks me one of these days what I am—or mean to be—I cannot tell him that I am a gentleman at large.'

'And you have resolved upon nothing as yet?'

'No; it seems I must be a lawyer, whether I like it or not.'

'A lawyer!' cried Helen. 'That you shall not! Why choose any profession? You have no occasion. I have enough for us both. Have I not, Bob?'—turning to O'Neill.

'Enough! I should think so. I'd be content with half of it,' O'Neill answered.

'But you know, Helen, I must do something. I cannot owe everything even to you,' Tom added.

'Why not? What is mine is yours. Uncle has a large sum of money in the funds for

me. Why can you not take it? If that be not sufficient, we have the rents,' she continued.

'You don't understand, my dearest, that I must carve out a career for myself. I must not depend entirely on my wife. It would be mean,' remarked Tom.

'Mean! Nonsense! I have more money than we shall want. Why then join a profession to make more? If you want to do something, and make yourself a name, become a country gentleman, and enter parliament. There is a career for you, but I say that you shall not be a lawyer. I don't want to have you like those horrid men with wigs that I saw in the Dublin law courts. I'll not hear of it!' Helen said, firmly.

'You are right, Helen; Butler has no occasion to be a lawyer. Parliament is the very place for him. There he can astonish the Britons. But first, we must find the free and independent electors to send him in. I move that he goes for the county. With the aid of the priests' and father's influence, we

can easily return him. L'Estrange will also help us,' said O'Neill.

'Oh, Bob, you dear old fellow ! Say no more, or I shall hug you,' Helen exclaimed, in great glee. 'That is the very thing to do. I can canvass the county with you. All the Abbey tenants will vote for us ; that is, if they like. We shall not force them.'

Tom looked at Helen and her cousin incredulously ; he listened to the turn the conversation had taken with amazement. He was silenced, but not convinced ; yet his heart beat violently at the mere prospect thus opened out before him. He had often dreamed of such a career. Perhaps the dream might become a reality. The wildest flight of his imagination might, after all, become a fact.

'Besides,' O'Neill continued, 'if you want fame, you can write books. There is the history of Ireland waiting for the historian. There are phases of Irish character that have never been depicted in fiction, or represented on the stage. All Irishmen are not blunderers ; they

do not all break their necks in steeple-chasing, or kill each other in duels, as some Irish novelists would lead people to suppose. In the habits, manners, and customs of the people—in the peculiarities of their character, language, and religion—in the varieties of race, and the sharp distinctions that separate them from each other—in the mixture of civilization and untrained nature that exists—in the gloom and mirth of the Celtic temperament and genius, with all their startling contrasts of light and shade—in the very scenery of the island, unrivalled as it is for grandeur, beauty, and desolation,—the novelist has an inexhaustible mine that as yet has been scarcely opened. Now, Butler, if you will write some novels, I'll try and write some songs.'

'Why don't you write the novels yourself?' inquired Butler. "Go up and possess the land."

'Bob's novels would be too sensational,' Helen laughed. 'He'd make his readers sup full of horrors.'

‘That’s what they want. A novel can’t be too sensational. If I ever write one, I’ll make it a regular stunner. I’ll have seven most elaborate plots, constructed one within the other—eight murders, five lost wills, twelve seductions, sixteen bigamies, twenty-two suicides, and elopements innumerable—all in three volumes; while thieves, policemen, cut-throats, brigands, gaolers, heroes, and heroines will figure on every page. That’s what novel readers want, the women especially. I’ll actually lift the hair off their heads,’ O’Neill said.

‘I told you so!’ Helen cried, turning triumphantly to Tom. ‘What would the world think of our national character from such a novel as that?’

‘I don’t mean that Butler should go in for sensation,’ O’Neill exclaimed. ‘His taste and judgment would not allow him to do that. He could write novels of character; describe homely, pathetic scenes; paint real life; produce works of art. But if I write I’ll go in

for harrowing events, brilliant colouring, and horrors, just to let people see what a sensational novel is like.'

'There you mistake,' Butler answered; 'the true artist finds his materials lying around him. A great painter takes a little beggar boy and transfers him to his canvas, and forthwith the picture becomes more valuable than the ermined and jewelled robes of an emperor. The writer need not resort to sensation or horrors, as you seem to think. He finds truth stranger than fiction, because it is true. To affect others, he has only to look within, and describe what he finds in himself. The tragedy is not in strange events, or in bolts and bars, but in our daily life. It is at our feet; "and the rude swain treads daily on it with his clouted shoon."' '

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A FORETASTE OF PARADISE.


THE lovers were alone. After dinner they had retired to the large drawing-room of the Castle. The windows opened upon a terrace, bordered with standard roses and the choicest flowers, from which a walk led down to the river's edge. It was a splendid evening, in the end of July. All heaven and earth were still. Not a breath of air disturbed a single leaf, and the very roses on their stalks were motionless as they distilled their rich perfumes. Not a ripple disturbed the glassy surface of the river. And as the sun went down, in an unclouded blaze of glory, the waters shone like burnished gold.

Tom lay on a lounge near the window, gazing with all a poet's ecstasy on the gorgeous landscape spread out before him; and as he

watched the setting sun, the shadows lengthened on the grass, and the brilliant hues of evening faded into twilight; until gradually star after star appeared in the serene heavens, and the harvest-moon uprose and flooded the earth with silvery light. At such a time, so peaceful and so still, the heart is more than ever susceptible of passion and romance; more disposed to thoughts of melancholy, or love; and Tom felt its soothing influence. He abandoned himself to all the intoxicating pleasure of the moment, and in a dreamy sort of rapture listened to Helen, as she accompanied herself on the harp, and sang in a rich, clear, soprano voice some of his favourite melodies.

‘These songs,’ he remarked, ‘should only be sung by moonlight, and at such an hour as this. “Soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony.”’

‘Some of them are so melancholy and pathetic that I dare not sing them when I am alone,’ Helen answered.



‘True,’ rejoined Tom. ‘It is because they are an echo to the wailings of Ireland’s griefs.’

‘Here is one,’ she cried, ‘the saddest and most beautiful of them all.’ And she played, in slow time, an exquisite air, not to be found in any published collection.

‘That is a strange, unearthly composition,’ cried Tom. ‘I never heard it before. Where did you get it? It is worthy to have been a Banshee’s song.’

‘Miss Dillon taught it to me. She learned it years ago from a blind old harper, who travelled through the country. She says that many of the finest Irish airs have never been published, and are now, it is to be feared, irrecoverably lost.’

Saying this, Helen arose from the instrument, and walked towards the window. The moonlight fell full upon the queenly figure and gave additional charms to the bare white arms, the polished shoulders, and the rounded bust. She gazed out at the beauty of the night a moment, and then sat down by Tom.

‘My love,’ she said, ‘how warm you are! your hands are burning. Are you ill?’

‘No,’ he said, ‘the heat of the day has given me a slight headache. Nothing more.’

‘And I have been making so much noise the last hour,’ she added.

‘It has been heaven to me, lying here, looking at you, and listening to you.’

‘Nonsense, sir! You must not flatter me.’

‘Helen, do you remember this day three months?’

‘Remember! can I ever forget it? It was the happiest day in my life, except—except to-day. Oh, I felt so happy!’

As she spoke, she bent her head towards Tom’s shoulder, and her hair touched his face; he felt her fragrant breath upon his cheek; and as the blushes crimsoned her neck and face, Tom felt his pulses throb tumultuously as he gazed upon the glowing beauties of the lovely girl beside him, and thought with delight that she was his own.

‘Tell me,’ she cried, in a low voice of inde-

scribable tenderness, 'are you as fond of me now as you were then?'

She was answered with a passionate kiss.

'But tell me—tell me, are you sure you care for me as much as ever?' she said.

'Yes, my darling! I love you above everything in the wide world.'

'I like to hear you say so,' she said, creeping closer to him, while he encircled her with his arm, 'sometimes I get melancholy, and can scarcely believe that you love me as I want to be loved. I never tire of hearing it from your own lips. 'Tis such a blessing to feel that you love me so much.'

'And are you then so very, very fond of me?' Tom in turn inquired, tenderly.

'I fear I am,' she answered. 'Shall I make you my confessor, and tell you all?'

'Do so, my love,' Tom rejoined; 'you will be sure of absolution.'

'Then I cannot say I love. That word sounds cold and commonplace. I fear it is idolatry—I worship you! You come between

me and heaven. A strange feeling creeps over me when I feel your touch, or hear your voice, or look into those dark, thoughtful old eyes, or watch the expression of your dear, wise face. The very sound of your footstep makes my heart beat wildly; and my whole soul goes out in passionate yearnings towards you. When I came home from Dublin that time, life was a perfect blank without you; I felt no interest in anything. I could do nothing but write to you, and read your letters in return. And now I am jealous even of the time you spend with Bob. When you are away from me, I never cease thinking of you; and I intend to say so many things when you return. I am so overjoyed when you do come back, that I forget everything I had resolved to say, and do not remember it till you are gone again. Then I stand at the window watching for the appearance of a stately head, and my heart jumps so when I see it; and I pretend to be so unconcerned before them all! I fear I am an awful hypocrite! Am I, do you think?'

‘No, my dearest girl,’ answered Tom.

‘Or, I sit down ten times a day to write to you, and tell you everything I feel.’

‘And what do you with these little notes?’ inquired Tom.

‘Why, I burn them all, lest you might laugh at me as a silly little goose. And I never read, or write, or work, or do anything great or small, without some reference to you; thinking what you would say, or how you would like it. And sometimes I go away to my own room, and have a downright good cry.’

‘Ah! I am not worthy of such a love as this,’ Tom ejaculated. ‘No man is!’

‘You are! You are! My darling. I feel that I can never love you enough. Sometimes I think, shall I be fonder of you when we are married, but that is impossible. I fear I am not so thankful as I ought to be. And—shall I confess more? I’m afraid I am becoming dreadfully cross and impatient, and bad-tempered; and that I lead them all an unpleasant life of it. But why do you laugh?’

‘At the idea of your leading any one an unpleasant life.’

‘Ah! you do not know me yet,’ she said.
‘But now I think I have told you all.’

‘There is one thing you have not told me yet,’ Tom said, fondly, to her.

‘What is that?’ she asked.

‘Did you ever love anyone else before you knew me?’

She stared at him in surprise, as she answered,

‘Ever love anyone else? Never! I never cared for anyone until I met you.’ She seemed hurt at the question, as if it implied some doubt of her sincerity—which it did not—and then continued, earnestly, ‘I may have had my childish fancies, and dreamed of the sort of lover I should like—all girls do—but I never gave anyone a serious thought, until I thought of yourself.’

‘But you have had plenty of offers?’ said Tom.

‘How do you know, sir, what offers I have had?’ Helen asked quickly.

‘A little bird has told me all about them.’

‘Bob, I suppose, has been telling you more of his nonsense. Even if I have had admirers, I was not to blame. It was not my fault.’

‘I am not so sure of that,’ said Tom, with a smile of mock incredulity. ‘Some of your admirers might say you were very much to blame—Mr. L’Estrange, for instance.’

‘Poor Mr. L’Estrange!’ Helen replied. ‘He proposed for me, certainly, and I laughed in his face. And now, Sir Jealous, I hope you are satisfied.’

If there be any one thing more delightful than another to a lover’s ear, it is to learn from the lips of his lady-love that he, and he only, has been the object of her affections; and now Tom’s only doubt on the subject was finally set at rest.

‘I am just speculating,’ said Tom, after a short silence, ‘on my good fortune, and wondering what you could have seen in me to make me worthy of your love. It’s a mystery.’

‘Perhaps I could not tell you, even if I tried,’ Helen rejoined. ‘But I so well remember the evenings in College, and sometimes as I listened to you, you seemed to me to be inspired. Then I found your ideas on almost every subject so different from other people’s, that I could not help being fascinated by you; and the aims you thought worthy of being pursued were so high, and your ambition was of such a lofty nature, that my enthrallment was complete. It was only this morning I was doubting whether I was fit to be your wife—for I am only an ignorant girl, who loves you very much, it is true, but who has little else to recommend her—and I began to think if you should meet with some one more suited for you, could I give you up?’

‘What an ingenious self-tormentor!’ interrupted Tom, fondly stroking her soft hair; ‘as if that were a very likely thing to happen.’

‘And I was obliged to confess,’ Helen continued, not heeding the interruption, ‘that I

could not. But yet I would do anything for your sake. I could lay down my life to make you happy. It would be easy to be your servant, or your slave—easy for me to make any sacrifice on your behalf. But to call you my own, to be near you all my life, to be next your heart, to hear your voice in tones of love, to sympathize with you, to be your wife—oh, my darling! this would be happiness too great for earth; a paradise which I do not deserve, and which I think somehow can never be mine!’ And she flung her arms around Tom’s neck, and looked sadly into his eyes.

‘My precious idol!’ Tom cried, as he folded the lovely girl to his breast, and kissed and soothed her; ‘my love! do not distress yourself like this. There, there, do not fear, we shall be happy.’ And he kissed her lips and brow, and pressed her to his heart, where she lay quietly happy and secure.

‘Besides,’ Helen continued, after a moment’s pause, ‘do I not owe everything that makes me happy to you?’

‘In the name of wonder, what do you owe to me?’ Tom asked, in astonishment.

‘Everything. I am a very different girl now from what I was when you first knew me,’ Helen answered.

‘Different! In what? To me you are the same darling as before,’ observed Tom.

‘When I think of what a vain, giddy girl I was, I almost hate myself.’

‘There, you are unjust again. You blame yourself without cause.’

She shook her head. ‘No: I know better. My life was a useless one. I had no purpose: no aim. The time went by unimproved. I neglected many opportunities placed within my reach. I was too much occupied with the vanities and frivolities that so many girls delight in to think of anything better.’

‘Again, I say you accuse yourself without reason in all this,’ Tom rejoined.

‘I do not. It would be hypocrisy of me to say so. Now, I think I am changed. You have taught me to think. You have taught

me to live. And, above all, darling, you have taught me to love. It would be worth enduring a lifetime of misery to enjoy the quiet bliss I have felt the last three months. I never knew what joy was before,' and she looked at Tom with swimming eyes.

'If you go on like this,' he cried, 'you will drive me mad. As it is, the happiness is almost greater than I can bear.'

A few short weeks had indeed produced an amazing change in Helen's character. Deprived at an early age of a mother's love and care, she yet grew up a buoyant, joyful child, blithe and gay as a lark; knowing no care, free from all anxiety, full of exuberant animal spirits, and quick to enjoy all the pleasures of youth. Her bright smiles and silvery laughter were contagious. But of late she had grown more sober, thoughtful, and subdued.

Beneath a brilliant and joyous exterior, there lay a depth of passionate feeling, an intense capacity for suffering and enjoyment, of which she was ignorant, until her love for

Butler revealed the fact. In a moment the slumbering passions awoke, which, for weal or woe, could never sleep again. He had revealed to her the secrets of her own consciousness; and upon him she poured out all that enthusiastic devotion of which only women of the highest order of mind are capable. Her wealth of burning love was boundless, and she lavished it all upon him.

Recognizing in him a kindred spirit, he became to her at once a hero, saint, and demigod. The universality of his knowledge, the vigour of his intellect, the brilliancy of his fancy, and the power of his imagination, dazzled and delighted her. While the grandeur of his ambition, the ideality of his aims, the strength of his character, and the force of his will made her a still more willing captive.

Women like to have some one whom they can rely on, cling to, reverence and fear, as well as love. Tom's qualities appealed to all the higher instincts of her heart. Her fancy, intellect, affection, and judgment all agreed in

the verdict in his favour, and combined to make him in her eyes an object worthy of her deepest homage and most supreme regard.

He more than realized all that her childish fancy had pictured, or her maiden dreams imagined. He more than satisfied all the thousand vague longings, all the undefined aspirations, of the woman's unoccupied heart. She found in him her idol and fell prone before the shrine. What was there, she asked herself, which he could not accomplish?

She loved to picture him as a great reformer, redressing social and political wrongs; or she imagined him haranguing crowded senates; or she loved to anticipate the time when his name would be renowned as the friend and benefactor of mankind. And with it all came the ecstatic thought that on her would devolve the task of comforting him in moments of sorrow; of soothing him in hours of pain; of sharing all his joys and griefs; of being his consoler, adviser, friend; and of how it would

be the study of her life to please him and make him blessed.

‘And now,’ said Tom, resuming the conversation, while Helen hid her face in his breast, ‘that you have made your confession, let me make mine. Yet, no! Why break the charm? Let the delightful illusion last!’

‘Oh, yes! darling, tell me everything,’ Helen said; ‘I will lie here and listen.’

‘I was thinking,’ he continued, ‘how little I dreamed, a few months ago, of the great happiness in store for me. Before I knew you I used to wonder if I should ever love, and whom, and what the feeling would be like.’

‘And have you never loved before?’ Helen asked eagerly.

‘Well, I have had the boyish fancy I told you of, but a serious passion like this, never.’

‘Thank God for that!’ was the faint reply.

‘I have wondered,’ he went on, ‘whether I should escape or not; for I knew that if I ever did love, it would be a matter of life and death with me. Sometimes I have thought I could

never find any girl to love me as I wished to be loved, and you see how wrong I was. Then, all my life has been one continued disappointment; an unbroken series of disenchantments; and the thought would come that love was like everything else, and that it, too, was vanity and vexation of spirit. Every other object had failed to give me the satisfaction I sought. And whether I placed my enjoyment in society, or friendship, or books, or ambition, or success, or what else, they all left a great want behind.

‘I have often asked myself the question, if love could give me the happiness that other things denied? Frequently I have been affected with melancholy, depression, and gloom. Would love remove them? Or, was love, as your cousin would say, the sovereign elixir of life? The balm for all its ills? These questions frequently recurred to me, and I could find no answer to them. These thoughts were constantly in my mind up to the time I met you in College.

‘That was the crisis in my history. The great revelation came to me at last. The great joy filled my heart. And what a revelation it was! What joy! It was a bliss greater than any of which I had imagined, or hoped, or dreamed. How happy I was! I walked on air. I exulted in my lot. The clouds and gloom all vanished. Life seemed more beautiful than ever. The whole world became transformed. “The light divine that never yet was upon sea or shore” illumined the distant horizon, and hope painted all the future in roseate hues.

‘How I thrilled that moment in Glassnevin when you told me that you loved me! How I have thrilled since at the remembrance of it! What a revulsion of feeling it was from despair to hope! How I have lain awake at night, and thanked the Giver of all good for such a priceless gift as you! How I have walked with you, and talked to you, and sat by you, as I do now, and how my heart has throbbed with the very excess of happiness!



‘Need I say how I love you? No man ever loved woman as I love you. I have not said much to-night, because all language is so poor, and tame and cold; so incapable of expressing the feelings and thoughts that fill my heart and brain. I need not say how this night’s conversation has endeared you to me. Nor need I tell you of the gorgeous, fairy pictures I paint, or of the castles I build in imagination, or of the day-dreams I indulge in—in which my Helen is the central figure—nor of my joyful anticipations of the future. You know it all.

‘And yet the old question comes back, is love everything? Is it free from the conditions, limitations, and imperfections which attach to all things human? And, above all, is it an exception from the fate which makes us dissatisfied with the present, and urges us on to the pursuit of the invisible, the unknown?’

He suddenly ceased, and mused, while Helen could only tremble in reply.

‘I did not like to tell you before,’ he con-

tinued, 'lest it might give you pain, but the last few days I have had the gloomiest forebodings. I do not think I am superstitious, but a presentiment of coming evil hangs over me which I cannot shake off. The same thing happened to me when my sister died.'

'It is because you are nervous,' Helen said. 'You have been sitting up, or, according to your own confession, lying awake at nights. Remember what Dr. Power said would be the consequence.'

'I know, an early death. As I watched the sun setting, while you were playing, a curious feeling stole over me, and I thought I should never see another summer pass.'

'This is unfair,' said Helen, sitting up and looking reproachfully at him. 'This is unkind. you will infect me with your foolish fears and make me as nervous as yourself. What nonsense you do talk!'

'Tell me, darling,' Tom inquired, 'if anything were to happen to me, would you regret me very much?'

Two large tears gathered in the beautiful eyes, as she replied, 'Why will you pain me thus by asking such a question? If anything should happen to you, I can only do one thing.'

'What is that?' Tom asked.

'Lie down and die!' Helen answered in a very low voice; but there was something in the tone of the voice, and the way she spoke, that said she meant it.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE REJECTED SUITOR.

ONE morning, towards the end of August, Sir Bernard Carew was once more on his way to Ballyluce Castle, to propose for Helen O'Neill. The morning had been clear and sunny, but towards noon it grew oppressively close and sultry ; the heavens suddenly became overcast with black clouds ; and the cattle and sheep huddled together under the trees, as if for shelter from the coming thunderstorm.

Sir Bernard took no notice of the threatening weather symptoms, but rode quickly on. He did not slacken his horse's speed until he entered upon a stretch of road nearly a mile long, completely overshadowed by rows of elms on each side, at the farther end of which were the entrance-gates of the Castle. There he pulled up, and throwing the reins on the

horse's neck, allowed him to walk the remainder of the distance.

He wanted time to arrange his thoughts and prepare for the coming interview. In spite of his conceit and self-possession, he began to be slightly nervous as he approached the house, and it was with some difficulty he retained in his memory the neat sentimental speeches, intended for Helen, that he had prepared on the road. From Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill he was sure of a favourable reception; and it was by private appointment with them he was going to the Castle to-day. The only point on which he was at all doubtful, was the manner in which he would be received by the young lady herself.

Several months had now elapsed since he broached the subject to Sir Arthur at the coursing meeting, and during all that time he had been mainly guided by the baronet's advice. He had not alarmed her by a hasty declaration, but had made it a point to attend all the balls and dinner parties where he was

likely to meet her, and on these occasions, surmise as well her favour by a thousand little attentions and flatteries, which ladies are supposed to love. He had been frequently at Ballinure Castle and, but since the journey of Helen and her aunt to Dublin, he had seen even less of Miss O'Neill than before.

As he reviewed the whole situation of affairs, he could not forget himself that he had made much progress in her favour. Nay, of late she seemed more distant and reserved to him than ever; and on the last three or four occasions, he had not been able to see her at all.

But what gave him the greatest uneasiness was Butler's presence at the Castle. He had not forgotten Helen's manner to him the night he first met him at dinner. The recollection of the smiles and looks she gave Butler on that occasion rankled in his memory; and, as he thought of their intercourse, so free and unconstrained, and of the perfectly familiar terms on which Butler seemed to be with Helen, as well

as of the many marks of favour with which she had distinguished him during the evening, Sir Bernard could have slain him.

‘Of course,’ he said to himself, ‘there is nothing in it. It is an instance of one of those absurd friendships that girls will form. The idea of anything serious between a pauper like Butler and Miss O’Neill is preposterous. She met him under peculiar circumstances, and this intimacy is the consequence. The knowing minx appears to notice him in order the better to vex and pique me. Even if she should form a passing fancy for this man her aunt and uncle would soon put a stop to all such nonsense. They are on my side ’tis true ; but yet, I wish Butler was out of the way. Confound him !’

But still, reason with himself as he pleased, Sir Bernard was far from being easy in his mind. Indeed, so little satisfied was he with his own arguments, that he had been at the trouble to get private information from the servants at Ballyluce about the movements of Tom and Helen. His uneasiness was not

lessened when he heard, on reliable authority, that Butler and Miss O'Neill were constantly together in the house and out of it; in the gardens, in the pleasure-grounds, on the river; and that she never seemed tired of his society.

‘I wonder Lady O'Neill permits all this,’ was his comment on the news. ‘There is no knowing what nonsense the girl may get into her head. I had better bring things to a crisis at once, and then we can end all this tomfoolery. When engaged to me, she must form no more intimacies of this kind. I will take care of that.’

But all this time it never entered Sir Bernard's head that Helen might refuse him. That was a possibility he never thought of. He knew his own value. Men like him were not plentiful in the country. In his estimate, it is to be supposed that he had not rated himself at too low a figure. He did not draw any comparison between himself and Butler. Nor was it likely that Helen had drawn any.

Giddy she might be : foolish and reckless even in her conduct—especially in admitting strangers to her friendship ; but that she should be mad enough to choose poor Tom Butler, and reject him, the rich Sir Bernard Carew, never once entered into his calculations.

If he was a little anxious, it was not from any fear of a rival, but because he knew there was no accounting for female tastes, and that their whims sometimes carried them to extraordinary lengths. Once only he seemed uneasy as the thought struck him,—

‘I wonder if she could by any accursed chance have heard of that d—d affair!’


And as he thought of the interview with Captain Flood a few months previously his brow contracted, and his face assumed the same malignant expression that had startled Butler the evening he arrived at Ballyluce.

In fact, some of the ‘wild oats’ that Sir Bernard had sown in former days had sprung up, and borne a most disagreeable kind of harvest. The sowing time of the same wild oats is a

pleasant one enough, but when you come to reap the harvest there is the very deuce to pay, especially if the crop puts you in danger of the hulks. Little does your dashing young man think of the day of reckoning as he flings the seed into the furrows—but the day of reckoning does not forget to come, though you may forget it. And as Sir Bernard scowled and swore, the scowl and the oath proved that though ‘the mills of the gods grind slowly, they grind exceeding fine.’

Was Sir Bernard then in love with Helen? Should the reader of these pages sympathize with him in his disappointment? Does not all true love, even when unsuccessful, appeal to our pity, and claim our sympathy? And not in vain. I suppose Carew was as much in love with Helen, as a man of his thoroughly selfish and worldly nature is capable of the feeling.

It pleased his vanity to think that the very finest girl in Ireland should bear his name, and be at the head of his establishment. It



gratified his avarice to know that his marriage with her would increase his income some seven or eight thousand a-year. And perhaps the jaded sensualist felt a momentary glow of pride and pleasure in the prospect of having such a lovely woman as his wife.

That was about the extent of Sir Bernard's passion. For of love in the true, high sense of the word, such natures are utterly incapable. Of love involving the idea of self-sacrifice; of suffering on behalf of the beloved object; of the love 'that beareth all things, endureth all things, hopeth all things,' whose very soul and essence is self-renunciation—of such love he had no idea.

Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill were at home to Sir Bernard. They received him in the library, and he was closeted with them there for more than half-an-hour. At the end of that time he came forth gay, and smiling; the very picture of a splendid, irresistible cavalier going to meet his lady-love. He was perfectly dressed, and there was about him that air of

calm assurance, of easy confidence, which is the surest augury of success in love or war.

Helen was in the garden busy amongst her flower-beds, and ignorant of Sir Bernard's presence in the Castle. She had on a light morning dress, a broad-brimmed garden hat—to save her complexion from the sun—and white gauntlets on her hands and arms. There Sir Bernard found her and pressed his suit.

He soon returned with hasty footsteps to the library. He looked at Sir Arthur and Lady Julia. His cheeks were actually livid, and his lips were compressed with rage. It was with difficulty he articulated the words to inform them that he had been rejected. That Miss O'Neill had refused him finally and unconditionally—would give him no leave to renew his suit—no ground for hope; that she had treated him at first with indifference, and then with disdain. That on being more warmly pressed, she had spurned him,—him, Sir Bernard Carew, Bart.—with insult, and with contempt. That she had evidently been prejudiced

against him by some person or persons unknown; and that, from what had passed between them, it was plain to him she was in love—engaged to some one else; and that it was none other than their guest Butler. And he, Sir Bernard, recommended Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill to look after him. Having relieved his mind of much more to the same effect, Sir Bernard bade them good-morning, and was soon galloping away from Ballyluce, on his homeward road—a mortified, rejected man.

For some moments after Sir Bernard's departure, Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill stared at each other without speaking a word. They were paralyzed by what Carew had just told them. Lady Julia was the first to find her voice:


'It is not possible. To refuse Sir Bernard Carew with one of the finest estates in the county is bad enough—the girl must be mad—but in love with—engaged to this Mr. Butler—I cannot, will not believe it!' And without

waiting for any reply, she left the library and took her way to Miss Dillon's room.

'I fear one is as true as the other,' said Sir Arthur, as he closed the door. 'Here is a pretty business. I always thought Nell would kick over the traces, and by gad she's done it. It's just as I feared. In love with Butler—engaged to him. No less. Whew!' And Sir Arthur relieved himself by a low, soft whistle, and took a pinch of snuff.

'I knew,' he continued, 'there was something in the wind. If Nell makes up her mind to a thing, she'll do it. I cannot prevent her—nor Julia either. Egad, but it's a nice windfall for Butler. Fortunate young fellow, that,' and he jingled his keys.

Lady O'Neill's first impulse was to go straight to Helen and tax her with the fact. But on second thoughts she resolved, like a skilful general, to reconnoitre the enemy's position before venturing on an attack in front. Perhaps it was not true—Carew might have been mistaken. She must be sure of her



ground before proceeding to extremities. But as she ascended the grand staircase and traversed the corridor leading to Miss Dillon's room, it suddenly flashed upon her that Sir Bernard was right.

She now remembered a hundred little things to which she had paid no attention at the time, but which looked at in the light of this new information, assumed significance. Why had Helen been so anxious to be alone with Butler? Why had she resorted to all these artifices—she now saw they were artifices—to get her aunt out of the way? Why had she made so many excuses to walk out, and ride, and drive alone with this man—or accompanied only by him and her cousin Bob? But Bob, in such matters, was as blind as a bat; and besides, he was infatuated about Butler, too.

This accounted for Helen's anxiety to be rid of the servants in her recent excursions, and fully explained her increased passion for the Irish melodies in the drawing-room in the evenings—music always gave Lady Julia headaches. She

saw it all now quite plainly. And she anathematized her own folly in having been so blind.

The moment Lady O'Neill entered Miss Dillon's room, the latter saw that something serious had occurred to her. The lines about her mouth were firmly drawn, and her face wore more than its usual expression of silent determination.

'What is the matter, my dear?' Miss Dillon asked, rising from her work, while Lady Julia carefully fastened and then locked the door.

'Something very serious has happened, Haddy' (it was only on rare occasions that Lady Julia called Miss Dillon by her Christian name. They Julia'd and Haddy'd each other years ago, when they were at school together, but of late years things were altered, and they called each other Miss Dillon and Lady O'Neill),—'very serious, and I am come to talk to you about it.' Miss Dillon was all attention. She instantly guessed what it was that brought Lady Julia to her room, but said nothing. She waited for her to begin.

‘Sir Bernard Carew has been here this morning,’ continued Lady Julia, as she took a chair and sat down opposite her friend’s embroidery frame; ‘he has just this moment left. He has proposed for Helen, and she has refused him. There!’

‘I am not surprised,’ Miss Dillon said; ‘I expected she would reject him.’ She saw that she might as well inform Lady O’Neill now of the actual state of things between Helen and Butler as at any other time. She might not have so favourable an opportunity again.

‘*You* expected she would refuse him! May I ask why?’

‘Because she is in love with some one else,’ Miss Dillon answered, with an effort.

‘And this some one else is Mr. Butler, I suppose?’ Lady O’Neill inquired.

‘You have guessed rightly. It is Mr. Butler. Helen is engaged to him.’

‘That confirms what Sir Bernard just now told me. He said she was. Pray, how long have you known all this?’

‘Since she returned from Dublin. Helen told me all about it then. I would have informed you before, but she made me promise secrecy until she gave me permission to let you know. I was obliged to keep my word.’

‘The sly, artful girl, to have kept me in the dark all this time,’ was her ladyship’s indignant rejoinder. ‘She has deceived me. This affair was going on in College then?’

‘It was. She was in love with Mr. Butler from the first time she saw him. The second letter I received from her was nearly all about him. I never knew anyone so completely infatuated with another as she is with him.’

‘But the man is a beggar!’ Lady Julia almost screamed in her indignation. ‘He has not one shilling in the world!’

‘Nevertheless she loves him,’ Miss Dillon rejoined.

‘The wretched, foolish girl! She might as well be in love with a pauper in the work-house. He has not an inch of land; he belongs to no family; has no expectations, no

social position ; not even a profession ! She must give up this folly, or she will drive me and her uncle mad.'

'She loves him,' reiterated Miss Dillon.

'Love him ! She must not love him. It is madness on her part. She will separate herself from all her friends and connections if she persists in this folly. She cannot love him. It is only a girlish fancy ; she will soon forget it when she finds we are all so opposed to it.'

Miss Dillon shook her head. 'It is something far more serious than that.'

'But,' persisted Lady O'Neill, 'Sir Arthur will never consent. I will never speak to her again. Her cousin Eugene will be furious. Even Bob will be against her there.'

'Her cousin knows all about it, and approves of it,' Miss Dillon said ; 'their correspondence has been carried on through him.'

'Bob knows all about it, does he ? And never told me a word. You have left me in ignorance. Bob, the wretched boy, has turned traitor to me. You are all against me. I

know no one in whom I can trust,' exclaimed her ladyship, peevishly.

'My dear, you really must not blame me. I did not seek Helen's confidence. She volunteered it. You know the kind of wayward girl she is. I was quite powerless. I knew from the first you would not like it, and told her so,' Miss Dillon pleaded.

'Like it! I only know that she shall never marry this man if I can prevent it. Never! He shall leave this house this very day. How blind I have been not to have seen and put a stop to all this before!' And Lady Julia got up and stamped her foot. 'To think that she should make such a fool of herself!'

'Let me advise you to be cautious,' Miss Dillon answered. 'If Mr. Butler leaves in consequence of anything you may say or do to him, my impression is that Helen will leave with him. You do not know her temper. I do. Avoid scandal, if possible. Quiet action is the best. Besides, remember that she is her own mistress; in a few months she will be

independent even of Sir Arthur, and can do as she likes. You must make the best of things.'

'True! I remember it too well. Her foolish father is to blame for a good deal of this. I always said my brother-in-law was wrong in making such a will. He should have tied her down strictly not to marry without her uncle's consent. No young girl with such a fortune should have been left free to follow her own whims and fancies. See what it may lead to in the present instance.'

'If Helen be disappointed in this matter, it will kill her,' remarked Miss Dillon. 'I know it will. Her very life is wrapped up in this young man.'

'Hoity-toity! Girls are not killed so easily, now-a-days. I don't believe in dying of love,' Lady Julia answered.

'If you had seen the state of excitement she was in the day Mr. Butler came here, you would think differently,' Miss Dillon said. 'Her enthusiasm was beautiful to witness,' and she described the whole scene.

‘ I see there is no use in my saying anything to the headstrong girl herself,’ Lady Julia remarked ; ‘ I should only make things worse. I must see Mr. Butler, and appeal to his pride. If we can only get rid of him, time and absence may cure her. I will go and speak to Sir Arthur.’ And she left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.


A FATAL RENCONTRE.

WHEN Sir Bernard Carew rode away from Ballyluce, rage and mortification were gnawing at his heart. His pride had received a fall. Not only had he been rejected, but he was rejected with every circumstance that could add bitterness to his humiliation. He had met with disastrous defeat where he expected an easy victory. Helen's indignant sentences were yet ringing in his ears. Her looks of haughty scorn had transfixed him, and his cheeks were now burning with wounded vanity and shame. He imprecated curses on her, himself, and all the world, as he put the spurs to his horse and rode furiously on.

'I wonder how much she knows?' he muttered to himself. 'Or does she know all? That look she gave me seemed to say she

was acquainted with everything. What did she mean, too, by that sneering question—Why I should insult any girl, by asking her to be my wife? Could Flood have been false to me? Yet no, my interests were his. He had nothing to gain by an exposure. From whom could she have heard it? She likes that Butler, I can see. I wish I had not put his brother out of the farm. No doubt he has told her of it. So she “must respect the man she marries,” must she?’ he added with an ironical emphasis on the word. And as the full recollection of the conversation with her came upon him, he swore a fearful oath. ‘By G—d, my lady, I’ll have you by fair means, or foul, and I’ll teach you to respect and fear me, too!’

It was his first intention to ride all the way home, but he changed his mind, and calling his servant, dismounted. ‘Here,’ he cried to the man, ‘take the horses round by the bridge, and meet me at the gamekeeper’s lodge in a couple of hours. I’ll walk across the fields to the ferry.’



It so happened that Butler and O'Neill had left the Castle that morning shortly before Carew arrived. They went down the river six or seven miles in O'Neill's boat. The latter wanted some grouse shooting.

'Now, Butler,' said O'Neill, 'as you are not inclined to take a gun, I'll go down and beat the lower moor. If I find no game there, I'll return and try the bog on the other side of the river. You can amuse yourself in the boat, or if you feel inclined for a stroll, there are some charming walks through the fields there, leading to the old church on the hill yonder. If I do not come in an hour or two, don't wait for me, I can walk home; or, if you like, meet me under the oak tree at the Rath about five, and we will go home together;' and he departed with his servant and his dogs.

Butler left the boat and walked leisurely across the fields towards the ruined church, admiring the rich pastures and the luxuriant turnip-fields, and was about crossing a hedge,

near which were some undressed, jagged blocks of limestone, collected for the purpose of building piers for a gate, when Sir Bernard Carew suddenly stood before him. The moment Carew saw Butler his wrath blazed up afresh, his face assumed the diabolical expression already spoken of, and he cried out in a voice hoarse with passion,—

‘Halloa, you sir! what the d—l brings you here? Do you know that you are trespassing on my lands?’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Butler, raising his hat politely, but surprised at the rudeness of Sir Bernard’s language, ‘I was only crossing from the river to the ruins of the church beyond. I did not know I was trespassing on your lands, and I am very sorry for it.’

‘Be off, now!’ said Carew. ‘Let me never find you here again, or I may set the dogs on you, if I do not do something worse;’ and he raised his riding-whip menacingly.

‘I have already told you,’ said Butler, calmly, ‘that I am very sorry for my uninten-

tional offence. I have given you all the satisfaction that one gentleman should demand from another ; your last threat was quite unnecessary, I assure you,' he added, with dignity.

In proportion as Butler became cool, Carew's passion increased. Butler's quiet self-possession seemed to add fresh fuel to Sir Bernard's fury. He could scarcely restrain himself as he cried out furiously—

'Be off, instantly! I do not want to bandy words with a fellow like you. Delay another moment, and I'll use this horsewhip.'

Butler started at the threat. He folded his arms quietly, looked at the baronet, and said, in a very low voice,—

'If you are a gentleman you will recall your words. Or do you want to pick a quarrel with me? You had better be cautious what you say and do. I warn you.'

'Gentleman!' roared Carew, 'what do you know about gentlemen? I quarrel only with my peers. Do you presume to lecture me, sir?'

‘I hope I am a gentleman,’ answered Butler, in tones of forced calmness. ‘I try to act as one, at least. You can imitate my example. To lecture you would be useless.’

‘And you prove yourself a gentleman, I suppose,’ sneered Carew, ‘by sneaking into rich men’s families, and trying to steal the affections of ladies, when you should be their lacquey. D—n your impudence!’

‘I enter no families where I am not an invited and welcome guest. If ladies honour me with their affections, it’s what they will not do to you, with all your wealth,’ retorted Butler, who suspected that Carew had received some recent cause for his vexation.

This last taunt stung the baronet to madness. It was the more galling because he felt that it was true. Sir Bernard Carew fairly screamed as he replied,—

‘The d—l take your presumption, sir! You try to spoil the game of your superiors, you infernal son of a sawbones!’

In a moment Butler was at Carew’s side ;

while his face flushed, and his eye gleamed. He put his clenched fist up to Carew's face, and glared angrily at him, as he cried—

‘You scoundrel! How dare you insult me thus! You are a ruffian! Down on your knees instantly and apologize, or I'll thrust your words down your throat—you dog!’

Carew's answer was a fierce and sudden blow of the whip across Butler's neck and shoulders. With a cry like that of a wild beast, Butler sprang upon him, and seized him by the throat.

‘You thief,’ he panted, ‘laden with the curses of the orphan, the widow, and the poor! You despicable hound! Your time has come! Defend yourself, for I'll trample you in the mire!’ and he tightened his deadly grasp.

Carew, although much the larger and stronger man of the two, was taken unawares by the suddenness of his opponent's onslaught. He endeavoured to free himself from Butler's clutch, but the white lithe fingers had closed in a grasp of iron.

‘Let me g-o-o,’ he tried to say, as he found himself suffocating.

Then commenced a desperate struggle between the two men. They swayed hither and thither, locked in a deadly embrace. Carew repeated his efforts, and exerted all his strength to shake himself free from his assailant, but without effect. Butler never for a moment relaxed his hold, till at length he hurled his antagonist with fearful violence to the ground.

In falling, the back of Carew’s head came in contact with the sharp edges of a large stone, which pierced his skull. The black blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he lay motionless on the earth. Butler stooped over him in affright. He looked around for water: there was none to be seen. ‘Carew!’ he cried, as he shook him, ‘come, get up! I did not mean to hurt you so much!’ There was no answer. Then he felt his wrist, but could find no pulse.

‘My God,’ he said, ‘I have killed him!’

and just at that moment a 'blinding flash of lightning rent the clouds, followed by a crashing peal of thunder; the bushes in the hedge were pushed aside, and Godfrey L'Estrange, with a fowling-piece on his shoulder, leaped to the ground before him.

L'Estrange looked from the prostrate form to Butler's white scared face. 'Butler,' he cried, 'what in the name of Heaven is this? What has happened?' and he flung aside his gun.

'I can scarcely tell you, L'Estrange. But I fear I have killed Sir Bernard Carew. What is to be done?'

L'Estrange knelt down by Carew, and felt his heart, but there was no pulsation. He lifted his hand, but it fell lifeless to the earth. 'He has either fainted,' he said, 'or he is actually dead. By all that's sacred, you have killed him! How did this happen?'

'I was walking across the field here, and he met me, and ordered me off in the most insulting manner. High words followed. His

language maddened me. I demanded an apology, and he struck me. A struggle ensued, and I remember no more; you saw the rest,' Butler answered.

'I see; hot blood on both sides, the word followed by a blow—the blow a fatal one,' and L'Estrange jumped upon the hedge, and looked long and carefully all around him, but there was no one in sight. The fields were all deserted. Only the forked lightnings saw the deed; the thunder was trampling up in the sky, and the rain was pouring down in torrents.

'Thank God for this rain,' he said to Butler. 'We are not likely to be seen now. This is a serious matter. You must fly at once. Leave me here to see what can be done. Go! Go this moment!'

'I shall stay and abide the consequences of my rash act,' Butler said, doggedly.

'Stay! are you mad? You must be insane! Think of the exposure, the shame, the disgrace, the consequences! What will the O'Neills,

the world, say? Fly! for Heaven's sake! while there is time.'

Butler stood a moment irresolute. He saw that L'Estrange was even more alarmed than himself. His words frightened him. 'The consequences,' what might they not be? He thought of Helen, his mother, Mark, the doctor. In a moment, his whole past life seemed to flash before him, the perspiration burst from him in streams, he trembled in every limb, a giddy faintness made his head swim, and a deadly terror froze his heart.

'But if I leave you, what will you do?' Butler asked hurriedly. 'It may bring you into trouble.'

'I don't know what to do. I must have time to think,' L'Estrange answered. 'I must get assistance somewhere. My gamekeepers are a mile or two behind me; under shelter, no doubt. I will make a *détour*, and go back to meet them. I must invent some excuse and send them to the ferry; they cannot well miss him, the dogs will be sure to find the body,'

pointing down to Carew, who had not given any sign of life. 'I must not appear to know anything, for if he is dead, there will be an inquest, and if I should be examined, I might compromise you. Now go! go! You have remained too long already,' and he forced him from the spot.

L'Estrange picked up his gun, thought a moment what step he should take next, and then proceeded in the opposite direction from that taken by Butler, and Sir Bernard Carew was left alone with his face turned up to the blackened heavens under the pouring rain.

Butler walked on rapidly, he knew not, cared not, where. He took no notice of the fearful thunderstorm raging over him; there was a more awful storm raging in his breast. He seemed anxious only to get away as far and as fast as possible, from the horrible spot where he had committed murder—yes, murder! and where he knew his victim was still lying.

It had then come to this at last! There was

blood upon his hand—his soul! This was the end of his career! L'Estrange, he knew, would be faithful to him, but still, murder will out. Already in imagination he saw the officers of justice on his track. He was arrested—in prison—standing in the felon's dock! Once the temptation presented itself—why not walk to the river, and bury there his guilt and his life together? It was but for a moment, however, and was rejected with a shudder as soon as it arose.

On he walked, heedless of the lightning and the thunder; over hedges and ditches; through the wet grass; across stubble fields, where he sank to the ankles in the wet clay; over the lanes and by-roads running with water; through the turnips and mangold wurzels, startling the partridges under his feet; and the anguish of his mind increased at every step.

In a few short hours he endured an age of torment. The thought that by one rash act he had destroyed his future life, ruined his prospects, rendered his marriage with Helen

an impossibility, and broken his mother's heart, drove him almost to frenzy. The war of the elements around him seemed in harmony with the war within him. In the torment of his mind he forgot all about his appointment with O'Neill. He dreaded now to meet him. How could he venture to look Helen in the face again? Should he confess to her the morning's dreadful work, and then leave her for ever? Could he stay at Ballyluce any longer? Or was it not better for him to start on some excuse at once for home?

It was evening by the time he reached the Castle, exhausted mentally and physically, and drenched as if he had been in the river. As he crossed the hall the servant approached him, and said Sir Arthur wished to speak to him immediately in the library.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

- ▶ ON leaving Miss Dillon's room, Lady O'Neill proceeded straight to Sir Arthur to inform him of what she had just heard. He was still in the library brooding over Carew's rejection by Helen, and the overthrow of all the plans he had formed concerning them. And although he was disconcerted by the failure of his hopes about the alliance with Carew, he could not help chuckling over Lady Julia's discomfiture, when she heard that Helen was engaged to Butler.

‘Hitherto she has been accustomed to have her own way in everything,’ he thought, ‘at least where I was concerned; but, I fancy, Nell will be a match for her. ’Twill be Greek meeting Greek.’

‘It is all true,’ said Lady O'Neill to her

husband. 'Sir Bernard was right. Helen has been insane enough to engage herself to Mr. Butler;' and she gave Sir Arthur a full account of her interview with Miss Dillon. 'She has known it for months,' Lady Julia said, in conclusion, 'and Robert has been in the secret from the very first. What an unfortunate thing that she ever met him!'

'Very unfortunate, my dear,' Sir Arthur rejoined, 'for us, and for herself—but very fortunate for Butler. Especially as I have no power over her. I have been looking through her father's will. She has only to wait another year, or less, and she will have absolute control over everything. She can then marry anyone she likes.'

'I know. But we must prevent this marriage at all hazards,' Lady Julia replied. 'I have come to discuss with you the best means of separating them.' And they spent the remainder of the day in laying down their scheme of operations.

When the servant told Tom that Sir Arthur

wanted to speak to him, he imagined it must be with reference to the morning's tragedy.

'Surely,' he thought, 'the news cannot have reached them so soon.'

Wet and wearied as he was, he proceeded to the library, where the servant, having announced him, closed the door. He found Sir Arthur and Lady O'Neill together in deep consultation, and needed no second glance to see that something was wrong. Sir Arthur asked him to take a chair, and Lady Julia assumed her very coldest manner. Tom took a seat, and, expecting to hear the worst, waited for them to begin.

'I have sent for you, Mr. Butler,' said Sir Arthur, after a number of preparatory hems and coughs, and the vigorous and repeated use of his pocket-handkerchief, and looking to his wife more than once for signs of encouragement to commence hostilities, 'to speak to you upon a matter of great importance to us and to yourself.'

Here he paused and took a pinch of snuff,

while Tom was wondering what the matter of importance could be. Evidently it did not relate to Sir Bernard Carew, as he had feared.

‘You are aware, I suppose,’ the baronet continued, ‘that I am guardian to my niece Helen, and the trustee to her property under her father’s will?’

‘Yes,’ Tom answered; he had heard as much from Sir Arthur’s son.

‘Very good,’ he resumed; ‘I have a large sum of money belonging to Helen invested in the funds. I think, my dear,’ turning to Lady Julia, ‘I may call it a large sum;’ her ladyship nodded in acquiescence. ‘Her annual income is at the least respectable, I may say, indeed, is increasing every year.’ And Sir Arthur looked at Tom.

Tom bowed in token of assent.

‘You will not deny,’ Helen’s guardian added, ‘that she has great personal attractions.’

No; Tom was not disposed to deny that either.

‘Her education,’ Sir Arthur continued, ‘has not been neglected, I think.’

Tom was very sure of that, too.

‘If then,’ her uncle went on, step by step—and every word he uttered sounded the death-knell of poor Tom’s hopes,—‘If then she has youth, good looks, accomplishments, and a good income: if she possesses all these things, and should think of a husband, her friends have a right to expect that he should have something to show in return. All the advantages should not be at one side. That is not unreasonable, Mr. Butler. Is it?’

Tom was silent. He felt the case was put against him unanswerably. He had forgotten all this. But now when he heard it stated in plain language, and stripped of all the colouring that romance had thrown around it, he could not deny its truth. Sir Arthur saw the advantage he had gained, and prepared to push it to the utmost.

‘I see,’ he continued, ‘your own good sense tells you I am right. When, therefore, a gen-

tleman proposed for Helen this morning; a gentleman of ancient family; a man of rank; of high social position; the possessor of a splendid estate;' laying emphasis on each sentence: 'a man in every way suited for her; and whom her friends consider a most eligible match; when this gentleman, I say, proposed for my niece, and did not experience such a reception from her as he had a right to expect, and when he told us that he believed the reason was, her affections were already engaged, that there was a rival in the way, and that the rival was yourself, I resolved, as the fairest thing to you, to send for you, and tell you what I had heard. You cannot blame me for this?'

Tom made no reply. He looked helplessly at the speaker, and listened to him with a choking sensation in his throat. Carew then had proposed, and had been rejected. Alas! all rivalry was out of the question now. He tried to speak, but his swollen tongue and parched lips refused him utterance.

‘I thought it best,’ resumed Sir Arthur, ‘without informing Helen of my intention—for girls are enthusiastic and unreasonable in such matters—to see yourself, and put the question to you as a man of the world, in whose honour and judgment I have great faith, should you think of her any more? Is it wise or prudent? Especially, is it fair to her? If you persist, you will seriously compromise her best interests, and grieve her best friends. You cannot, in common prudence, expect them to countenance your pretensions. It is folly to think of it. I know you would not like to injure her. You will not, therefore, prevent her from making an advantageous settlement in life. In fact, I rely upon you to extricate us from a great difficulty. Come! What do you say?’

‘I love her, Sir Arthur,’ was all poor Tom could say, despairingly.

‘No doubt. No doubt. It was very natural that you should. I cannot say that I blame you for it. We all do foolish things of the

kind at one time or another. But then, my dear sir, consider. You are very young. You have scarcely entered upon life yet. You have had little experience. You have not yet chosen your profession, and have your way to make in the world. You must not think of marrying yet. I speak as a friend. Besides, if you marry a rich wife, you lay yourself open to the charge of being a mere fortune hunter. Mind, I do not say that it is so, far from it, but that is the view the world will take of it. The world, my good sir, is very uncharitable!’

A more artful speech Sir Arthur could not have spoken. It was more calculated to effect his purpose than if he had covered Tom with abuse, and overwhelmed him with invective. Even the very kindness and pity of its tone wounded him more deeply than anger could have done. Every word of it fell upon him with torture as great as if molten lead had been poured upon his quivering flesh.

‘I appeal, therefore,’ said Sir Arthur, in conclusion, ‘to your good nature, to your good sense,

even to your regard for Helen, to think no more of her. The world with all its excitements and pleasures is before you ; ambition will occupy your mind. Forget her, and help her to forget you. Tell her that it would be imprudent to go any further in the matter. That your interest as well as hers demand that all intercourse should cease between you. I do not want to be inhospitable to a guest of mine, but I am almost inclined to ask you to go away, and not see Helen any more. Do us this favour, my dear sir, and we shall always be your friends.'

'Yes, Sir Arthur ! I shall go away in the morning,' Tom moaned piteously ; 'you are right. But I love her ! I love her !'

And there was such an expression of hopeless misery and despair in his face, that Sir Arthur's kind heart quite felt for the young fellow.

Lady O'Neill sat by chafing with impatience during the delivery of these speeches by her husband. She was not satisfied with this mild

kind of warfare. She rather scoffed at the gentle, persuasive tone of Sir Arthur's remarks, and instead of soothing and entreating him, she felt inclined to burst out upon Tom with reproaches—with charges of violated confidence—of having taken advantage of an accidental position to entangle Helen in a clandestine correspondence; and of having secretly paid his addresses to her without the consent and knowledge of her friends. It was an offence, not to be forgiven nor condoned, that Butler had dared to aspire to the hand of her niece. She was shocked at his audacity, and could not find language strong enough to express her feelings.

All this and more she intended to say to Butler, but when she saw that her indignation was not necessary, that he so readily complied with Sir Arthur's suggestion to go away, her wrath became more moderate. Ignorant of the events of the morning, she attributed Butler's misery and depression to the fact that his engagement with Helen had been dis-

covered, and that he was conscious of the hopelessness of his case. She flattered herself that he dreaded her displeasure; and, as he was so utterly crushed and humbled, her hostility to him was half disarmed. She therefore contented herself with saying,—

‘I do not want to reproach Mr. Butler. I leave that to his own conscience. I know that we are under obligations to him; but I consider that this affair with Helen has cancelled the debt.’ Here Tom made a feeble attempt at protesting that Lady O’Neill had never been under any obligation to him. Lady Julia, however, took no notice of Tom’s protest, but continued,—‘I know we were debtors to Mr. Butler, but we are so no longer. He has betrayed our confidence: he has made use of the influence he gained over the mind of a young, enthusiastic, inexperienced girl to her serious injury. I am glad to hear him say he is conscious of it.’

‘My dear,’ Sir Arthur interrupted, ‘don’t you think that is speaking rather strongly?’

Mr. Butler has handsomely agreed to what I proposed, and—'

'I know what I am saying, Arthur, and do not use words lightly,' Lady Julia replied. 'Mr. Butler has agreed to go away; that is the least he can do. He cannot repair the mischief that has been caused, or undo the past.'

Tom was looking supplicatingly from her to Sir Arthur, as if deprecating her anger. Lady Julia thought she was making him feel the enormity of his conduct, but Tom was not thinking of Lady Julia and her wrath at all. His thoughts were busy with the scene in the field that morning, and all its hideous consequences. He was wondering what L'Estrange had done after he left him; or whether his guilt would be discovered, and thinking especially of the influence the event might have on his relations to Helen and their future prospects; but of all this he could not breathe a word. He made no effort to defend himself from the charges that Lady Julia brought against him.

She mistook his silence as a confession of error, and continued :—

‘I am glad to hear Mr. Butler say he is going away in the morning ; but I think we have a right to demand a solemn promise from him, that from this day forward he will not write to Helen, or communicate with her in any way.’

‘Nay,’ said Tom, ‘I cannot give such a promise as that. I will go away to-night—at once—if you wish it. I know I am not worthy of Miss O’Neill. God help me ! I can say no more.’ And, as he uttered the last words, Helen herself glided suddenly into the room.

No sooner had Lady O’Neill left Miss Dillon that forenoon, than the latter proceeded to the garden in search of Helen, and informed her of all that had occurred between herself and her aunt. Helen was not alarmed. ‘Well, dear,’ she said, ‘I am glad it’s over ; aunt must have known some time or other, and the present is as good as any. I knew it would be a shock

for her. It will be all the better now that she knows everything. I disliked the concealment exceedingly.'

All the afternoon Helen was eagerly expecting Butler's return to the Castle. She was dressing for dinner when he arrived. Unable to find him, she inquired of the servants where he was, and being informed that he was in the library, she proceeded thither, and found him with her aunt and uncle. As she entered the room she heard Lady Julia's last sentences and Tom's reply. Walking swiftly in she stood between them, and drawing her figure up to its full height, exclaimed, as she looked from one to the other, 'What is this I hear? Go away to-night—at once! Never write to me, or see me again! Promise not to communicate with me! Aunt, what are you saying? Tom, tell me, what does it all mean?'

Lady O'Neill was startled at Helen's unexpected appearance on the scene, and bit her lip. Sir Arthur looked confused. Tom's face

brightened up for a moment when he saw her. They were all three silent.

‘Why do you not speak?’ she asked again, and going up to Tom, put her hand on his shoulder. ‘Tom,’ she cried, ‘tell me, what is it? Something dreadful has happened. I am sure of it. I saw it by the expression of your face just now. Why do you turn away from me?’ and she clung to him.

‘Nothing has happened, Nell,’ said her uncle. ‘Don’t be alarmed.’

‘Something has happened, uncle. I am not to be so easily deceived,’ she answered.

She had been too much accustomed to watch the different expressions of Tom’s face, not to see that something unusual had occurred. Even Miss Dillon’s account of her aunt’s determination to separate her from Butler was not a sufficient explanation of the anguish and despair that were depicted in his countenance.

‘Well, if you must know, Nell,’ her uncle answered, ‘I have been speaking to Mr. Butler

about you; and he agrees with me that it is better for both that you should part.'

'Your relative positions, and prospects in life are so different, it should never have been thought of,' added Lady Julia.

'I see,' said Helen, 'that you have both been reminding him that I am rich, and that he is poor, and asking him to leave your house. Have you forgotten that you owe your son's life to him? Was this generous or just of you, aunt? Was this kind of you, uncle?' Helen asked, appealing to both.

'I have been telling him,' Sir Arthur answered, 'that a gentleman of your own rank had this day proposed for you, and that if he persisted in this foolish fancy, it would compromise your interests, and perhaps destroy your happiness for life.'

'Happiness, indeed!' Helen retorted, with a look of magnificent scorn, that gave an additional grandeur to her beauty. 'You should have told him that a villain insulted me with his proposals, and that I had no

father or brother to protect me from his insolence. You should have told him that a man without a shred of character—a gambler, and worse—an extortioner, a tyrant, and an oppressor of the poor, had dishonoured me by asking me to bear his name, and that you did not chastise him. You should have told him that Sir Bernard Carew wanted to buy me, body and soul, and that you were willing to sell me—that my own uncle and aunt were consenting parties to the vile transaction.’

‘Helen!’ Lady O’Neill here broke in, ‘what are you thinking of? What are you saying?’

‘Thinking of, aunt! Saying! I am only saying the bitter truth that you force from me, that my aunt wanted to sell me to a scoundrel! If you think I speak too strongly of him, ask my cousin Eugene. He will tell you what kind of man Sir Bernard Carew is—the man you wish to be my husband.’

‘Oh, uncle,’ she continued, addressing Sir Arthur, ‘have I deserved this from you?’

If my dear papa were alive, would he consign me to such a cruel fate? What have I done that you should become my enemy?’

Both uncle and aunt were shocked at being thus assailed by Helen, and the scornful way in which she denounced Carew, but they were still more shocked when she went up to Butler and took his hand in hers. She felt that it was clammy and cold as ice.

‘Tom,’ she said to him, ‘have I not faithfully promised to be your wife?’

Poor Tom looked mutely at her in reply.

‘And have you not all as faithfully promised to be my husband?’

Again he tried to speak, but his lips only moved. ‘She little knew,’ he thought, ‘of the awful gulf that had opened that morning at their feet, and separated them for ever.’

‘I mean to keep my promise, Tom,’ she said; ‘I know you will keep yours.’ Then turning round, and facing her aunt and uncle, she went on:—‘I love Mr. Butler; he loves me. I shall never love another. I can never

think of anyone else. Yet you ask him to go away, never to speak to me, or write to me again,'—still holding Tom's hand, and looking up confidingly in his face—'He will not leave me. He will not promise that. If he leaves, my mind is made up. I shall go with him. I will never marry anyone else. I do not want to grieve you, uncle, nor you, aunt. You must both forgive me, and love me as before.'

As she spoke the door opened, and the servant announced that dinner was on the table.

CHAPTER XL.

TRAGICAL TIDINGS.

DINNER passed off silently that evening at Ballyluce. Only Sir Arthur, Lady Julia, and Miss Dillon sat down to table. Miss Helen went from the library to her boudoir in a fit of indignation, and refused to join the family circle. Butler sent his compliments, and prayed to be excused. O'Neill had not yet returned from the moors.

Dessert was placed upon the table, and the servants had retired before Lady Julia broke the silence, and gave Miss Dillon an indignant account of the scene that had just taken place in the library; with many comments on the headstrong obstinacy and perverseness of her niece. She continued:—

‘I expected better things from Helen, but she has grievously disappointed me. She has

no sense of what is due to her own position and dignity: none whatever. I must do Mr. Butler the justice to say, that he manifested a proper spirit, and seemed to feel how wrong he had been. But just fancy, Haddy, Helen asked him in my presence, not to desert her, but to keep his promise of making her his wife—she did actually! The girl is beside herself!’

Lady Julia was proceeding in this strain, when the servant brought in coffee, and behind him followed O'Neill. He had not waited to dress, but big with his news, entered the dining-room in his shooting costume, and told his horrified hearers that Sir Bernard Carew had been found murdered that evening a few miles down the river. Unconscious that the murdered man had been at the Castle that morning, and knowing nothing of the reason of his visit, O'Neill told them the whole story, with all its terrible details.

He was not surprised at their consternation, for he was equally shocked himself, and the sight he had just witnessed left a deep impres-

sion on his mind. Helen and Butler were forgotten for the moment in the interest excited by this fearful tragedy, and his hearers listened with blanched faces, as he described to them the locality of the crime, and the appearance of the murdered man.

‘The storm,’ he said, ‘destroyed all chance of sport, and flooded the bogs. I returned from the moors to the ferry about five o’clock, where I expected Butler to meet me. There I heard that the murdered body of Sir Bernard Carew had been discovered in a field by L’Estrange’s gamekeepers a few hours before. I immediately repaired to the spot, and found that the body had been carried to the Castle-town police station, where a large crowd was assembled. I met L’Estrange there, who told me all the particulars. The whole country is in a flame of excitement—nothing else is talked of. The general impression is, that Sir Bernard has been murdered on account of the recent evictions on his estate.’

‘God bless my soul!’ cried Sir Arthur,

rising from the table, in a state of great agitation, ‘Murdered! How terrible! To think that he was here this morning, full of life and strength, and proposed for your cousin, Helen, and was rejected; and now lying cold and dead! Of course he has been murdered! The last time I was speaking to him on the subject I warned him that he was playing a dangerous game, but he laughed at me. The unfortunate man! No discovery of the murderers, I suppose?’

‘Not the slightest. The police are completely at fault,’ answered O’Neill.

‘They always are in such cases. No wonder, they have a whole population to baffle them. The police are not to blame. Murdered! God bless me! Poor man!’

Half-an-hour later O’Neill was in his cousin’s room, repeating to her the story he had just told in the dining-room. Much as Helen disliked Sir Bernard, she was greatly shocked at his untimely end, exclaiming, as her cousin finished,—

‘How dreadful! What an awful fate! The wretched, wretched man!’

Then she gave her cousin a full account of her interview with Sir Bernard in the garden that morning, her aunt’s conversation with Miss Dillon, and especially of what had just taken place in the library.


‘Tom is going away in the morning,’ she said. ‘Aunt or uncle have said something to him that I did not hear. Something unusual has happened to him—I know there has. I saw it in his face. He has had no dinner—bring him down here, and I will order in some tea,’ and her eyes were red from weeping, as she spoke.

Very unwillingly Tom complied with Helen’s summons conveyed to him by O’Neill. He wanted to be alone with his great misery—alone with his disappointed expectations, his distracted thoughts, and his buried hopes. He wanted to hide his tell-tale face from Helen’s searching eyes, from O’Neill’s scrutinizing glance. He dreaded to meet the inquiring

looks that she would bend upon him, and to which he could not give a truthful answer.

He trembled lest he might betray his fearful secret. He even thought of going away that night without seeing her again, in order to avoid further risk of discovery. Yet, how could he leave her without bidding her farewell?—farewell for ever! What a prize he had lost! What a disastrous shipwreck he had made of fortune, happiness, and life! If he had committed suicide, he could not have more effectually destroyed his future prospects. Henceforward he had no future. He could hope for nothing now but obscurity; and even that might be denied him.

He now rejoiced that Sir Arthur had given him an excuse for leaving Ballyluce. He was glad that Helen had heard her aunt ask him to give her up, to communicate with her no more. They had furnished him with a reasonable pretence for his departure, an excuse better than any he could have invented. Better she should think him false to his vows,



fickle to his love, than that he should link her fate to his. If discovery came, he alone would be involved in it. She should not be exposed to the ignominy and the shame.

His presentiments had been correct. The dreaded evil had befallen him. The storm had burst upon his head. But through the black clouds that came down upon him, there gleamed one cheering ray of light, one joy of which no earthly power could deprive him — Helen's love. How nobly she had confessed it an hour ago, when, in her uncle's presence, she had asked him to make her his wife.

Nerving himself for the trial, Tom listened with unmoved countenance as O'Neill, for the third time, repeated the story of Carew's murder, while Helen poured out the tea. When O'Neill declared, that instead of being waylaid by half-a-dozen assassins, as was generally imagined by those who had visited the scene of the murder, he believed that Carew's death resulted from a struggle with

one man, Tom's hand shook visibly as he took a cup of tea from Helen; but he excused it by saying he was shivering all over from the drenching he had received, and that he was afraid he had caught cold.

'Helen has just told me,' said O'Neill, addressing Tom, 'of what took place this evening between my father and mother and yourself. Is it true that you intend leaving us so soon?'

'Yes,' Tom answered, 'I am going in the morning. You could not expect me to remain. Sir Arthur politely requested me to leave, consequently I have no option.'

'It's a burning shame! That's what I call it,' said O'Neill, warmly. 'I do not wonder at my mother doing it, because she has peculiar notions of things, but I did not believe my father could so far forget himself. I mean to tell him so in the morning.'

'Let me beg of you not,' Tom answered, sadly. 'I have nothing to complain of. Sir

Arthur has treated me with the greatest kindness and consideration.'

'In ordering you to leave his house!' retorted O'Neill, quickly. 'That may be one way of showing kindness, but it's a very queer way. I don't like such inconsiderate consideration. What do you say, Helen?'

'I fully agree with you, Bob. It's abominable of both aunt and uncle. I don't mean to submit to it, however. I shall soon be in my own house. No one can order us out then,' Helen replied.

'Right! cousin. If I understand you properly, you mean to go back to the Abbey? If I were you, I would.'

'I do. What day is this? The 23rd of August. The Cogans' term expires on the 1st of October. They are going to Paris then, I believe. I shall have the old home re-painted and decorated, and go and live in it myself. I shall expect both of you gentlemen to visit me there,' Helen said.

'Bravo! Helen. Book me for three months,

at least. On consideration, however, that Butler will come. I'm sure he will not refuse,' O'Neill cried joyfully. 'We may then be amiable, and ask the Iron-hearted and my mother to come see us occasionally.'

'If anything could increase my misery,' said Tom, 'and I do not think there is a more unhappy man alive than I am, it would be the fact that I had broken up this happy home. I earnestly entreat of you, Helen, do not carry out this intention.'

'Why not, pray?' Helen inquired.

'Because, my dearest, your uncle and aunt are right. I am not worthy of you. It was madness of me to think of it. Now I see my own folly,' Tom answered.

'When were you converted?' asked Helen, mockingly. 'Has my aunt's eloquence produced such wonderful effects already?'

'But your uncle will never give his consent. He said he would not, nor can I expect him to do so,' replied Tom, evasively.

'Don't mind what he says,' O'Neill inter-

rupted ; 'Helen can wind him round her finger. She will make him consent.'

'Supposing I should not make him,' said Helen, looking at Tom ; 'what then ?'

'Then I could not, in honour, in fairness to you, in justice to myself, ask you to fulfil your promise,' replied Tom.

'Which means that you are willing to release me from my engagement. Is not that it ?' inquired Helen.

'I fear so. I cannot help it. I am not a free agent in the matter,' Tom answered.

'But supposing I am not willing to release you from your engagement ; what then ? Will you break your promise ? Have you forgotten your vows ? Are you going to desert me ? — to leave me miserable, because my aunt has spoken a few angry words to you ? Is this the eternal constancy you vowed to me so often ? Now, sir, what defence can you offer for making a lady sue to you in this humble fashion ?'

Tom looked at her, and again she saw the

look of anguish on his face that had so startled her when she entered the library that evening. O'Neill also noticed it.

'Tom,' she said tenderly, laying her hand on his arm, 'What ails you? You are changed. What has occurred? You are keeping something back from me. Do not tell me,' she cried, as she saw him about to deny that anything strange had happened, 'I know better. Twice this evening have I seen that expression of agony in your eyes. Nothing that aunt or uncle said could have caused it.'

'I am not well,' he groaned; 'I am unhappy at the idea of leaving you.'

She shook her head. 'That is not it. There is some secret which you refuse to tell me. I tell you everything. I have no secrets from you. I would trust my life to you. Yet you have no confidence in me.' And she walked away from him, hurt and dissatisfied.

Half-a-dozen times, within as many minutes, Tom was about to confess everything to her; and, if she had been alone, he might have done

so, but O'Neill was present, and watching him curiously, as he expressed his willingness to give up Helen. O'Neill was not satisfied with Tom's explanation, and thought with her that he *had* some secret which he was unwilling to confide to them.

Late that night O'Neill entered Butler's bedroom. He found him sitting at the window, and looking out on the river, lost in thought. He sat down beside him, and talked with him as he used to in the old College days.

'Butler, old fellow, I could not go to bed without coming in to have a chat with you.'

Tom looked anxiously at him, for he saw that O'Neill had something more to say.

'You and I have been always good friends,' continued O'Neill. 'We can trust in each other to any extent, I believe, can we not?'

'Certainly,' said Tom, not knowing the drift of his friend's meaning.

'If I were in any great trouble,' resumed O'Neill, 'if any misfortune should befall me, I think I would come to you, sooner than to my

own father, and I hope, Butler, if you were in trouble, you would come to me.'

'I think,' said Tom, 'that next to my brother Mark, I would trust to you sooner than to any other man in the world.'

'I knew you would say so,' replied O'Neill; 'and now I want the proof of your confidence.'

'What is it?' Tom asked, a little perplexed.

'It is about Sir Bernard Carew,' O'Neill answered, in a very low voice.

At the sound of the words, Tom shuddered and grew deadly pale.

'Here,' said O'Neill, putting his hand into his pocket, 'is something of yours, that I found close to the spot where Carew was killed to-day,' and he handed Tom the ring which Lady O'Neill had presented to him in College; on which was engraved the name, T. Stead Butler.

Tom took the ring with trembling hand, gazed steadfastly at it, then looked inquiringly at O'Neill.

'As I was examining the spot where the body was found to-day,' added O'Neill, 'I saw

this shining in the clay and picked it up, without anyone seeing me too. And now, dear Tom, tell me all about it. How did it happen? This is the secret that you would not tell Helen to-night. Now tell it to me.'

And sitting there at midnight, looking out upon the darkly-flowing river, Tom told him the whole story from beginning to end.

'I guessed it all,' replied O'Neill, 'the moment I found the ring, and I fancied, from L'Estrange's confused manner, that he knew more about it than he told me. But the secret is as safe with him as with ourselves.'

'You can now understand,' said Tom, 'my anxiety to get away. Of course, after what has occurred, everything is over between Helen and myself. Not a word of this to her for worlds!'

'There,' said O'Neill, 'I think you are wrong. I would advise you to tell her every word. I know it will not change Helen in the least. You are certainly wise in going home, but I would not conceal the matter from her. You

know, after all, it was accidental. You did not mean to kill him.'

Tom was not convinced by O'Neill's arguments, however pleasing they might be to him.

He had determined to go away, he said, and never see Helen any more. But this idea O'Neill strongly opposed, as foolish in itself and unjust to Helen; and which, if carried out, might be disastrous in its consequences.

'I will tell her everything,' said O'Neill, 'when you have gone, and you can write to each other as before. For her sake you must agree to this, for if you desert her it will break her heart.'

Tom reluctantly consented to O'Neill's suggestions, and, with a warm clasp of the hands, the two men, greater friends than ever, separated for the night.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE INQUEST.

FROM the 'County Chronicle' we extract the following:—

'BARBAROUS AGRARIAN MURDER.

'It is our painful duty to inform our readers of another savage agrarian murder. The victim, in this instance, being no less a person than Sir Bernard Carew, Baronet, one of the most energetic and improving landlords of whom Ireland could boast. The lawless and sanguinary combinations, unfortunately so rife amongst an ignorant and deluded peasantry, have succeeded in striking down the first man in our county, and one whose irreparable loss will be felt far and wide. Ribbonism can boast of another victory. Another illustrious name is added to the long and bloody catalogue of its victims. The intelligence which

we communicate to-day will send a thrill of horror through the country, and men will ask themselves with indignation whether we have a government at all, and how long a sleeping and incompetent executive will leave the lives of loyal men exposed to the attacks of the vile assassins in our midst?

‘From all that we can learn of this horrible event, and our special reporter has just returned from the scene of the murder, the following are the principal facts, for the correctness of which we can vouch. It appears that, on last Wednesday, two gamekeepers, named Falvey and M’Evoy, in the employment of Godfrey L’Estrange, Esq., of Castle Knock, were proceeding, in the midst of the awful thunderstorm that prevailed, from Kennedy’s cross-roads to the Cranagh ferry, on the Shannon. About midway between the cross and the river, they were climbing over a stile leading into a stubble field, when they saw a man lying on the ground to their right. It proved to be the body of Sir Bernard

Carew: quite dead. Frightened as the men were, they proceeded to examine the corpse, and found that Sir Bernard had been barbarously murdered. His skull had been beaten in with bludgeons, in the most savage manner, and his brains lay scattered about. Life had fled, but the body was still warm. Falvey, the head keeper, immediately sent M'Evoy forward to the police station, about two miles distant, to give the alarm, while he remained behind to watch the corpse. Sergeant Cooper, accompanied by five sub-constables, soon arrived on the spot, and commenced a most searching investigation into this mysterious occurrence.

‘The ground where the body lay had been all trampled and beaten with footsteps, giving evidence of the deadly struggle that had taken place. As marks of fingers were found on the throat, it is supposed that the assassins surprised the deceased as he was crossing the fence, and that one or more of them held him in front, while the others assailed him from behind with bludgeons. They evidently did

not like to use fire-arms, if they had any, lest the report might attract the attention of passers-by or workmen in the adjoining fields. It is also plain that the motive of the murderers was vengeance, not robbery, as the watch and chain of the deceased, and a purse filled with bank-notes, were found untouched on his person. A splendid diamond ring also had not been removed from his finger. A pair of Colt's six-barrelled revolvers, loaded and capped, were in his breast pockets, but they must have escaped the attention of the assassins, or they would have been a welcome prize. Their owner must have been surprised, or doubtless he would have used them. He always went about heavily armed. Some threatening letters that he had recently received were found in his pockets.

'The remains were at once removed to the constabulary station, where the inquest was held yesterday. A full account of the evidence and verdict will be found in our columns. We are informed that a proclamation will be issued

by government, offering a reward of a thousand pounds for the discovery of the assassins. Sir Arthur O'Neill, of Ballyluce Castle, as Lord Lieutenant of the county, has convened a meeting of magistrates for Monday next to consider the subject, and to take measures for repressing the spirit of outrage which prevails. It is rumoured that they will petition government for a special commission. The constabulary are scouring the country night and day, but as yet they have discovered no clue to the perpetrators of this frightful deed.'

This was the account given to its readers by the 'County Chronicle.' A whole page of the same journal was filled with the evidence taken at the inquest and the coroner's charge to the jury. Before the witnesses were examined, that official enlarged on the high position of the deceased, the disturbed state of the country, the insecurity of life and property, and the dreadful nature of the crime they were about to investigate, and then they proceeded—coroner, jury, witnesses, police, magistrates,

and spectators—to view the scene of the murder.

Patrick Falvey, head gamekeeper to Mr. L'Estrange, was the first witness examined. He deposed to the finding of the body, which he might have passed, if the pointers had not attracted his attention to it. He found the deceased lying on his back, with his eyes open, and his mouth and nose covered with blood. His riding-whip was lying on the ground, a few yards from him. The earth around where he lay was very much trampled, but the heavy rain had so deluged the ground that he could not recognize particular footsteps. He had never witnessed such rain before. Had found no weapon of any kind near the body, although he had searched carefully, while M'Evoy went for the police. It was about two o'clock in the day, as well as he could judge, when they found him. In answer to questions from the jury, he had no doubt that Sir Bernard Carew had been murdered: neither could one man, nor two, nor three, in his opinion,

fields in the direction of the river. He never saw him alive afterwards. He had gone to the lodge in obedience to orders, and waited there. Heard from a passer-by that his master had been killed. Was very much frightened. Knew that deceased's life had been frequently threatened: the late baronet laughed at these threats. He always went out armed, and said, if attacked, he would sell his life dearly. Witness was in the habit of loading his pistols: had done so the morning of the murder. The pistols produced were the property of his master. Identifies the body as that of Sir Bernard Carew.

On cross-examination of this witness: he said they had not met many persons on the road; only two women and a boy, to the best of his belief. After deceased left him he noticed two men on horseback under a tree, they were looking towards him; one of them had on a black-silk hat, the other an old caubeen. Perhaps they were under the tree for shelter, as it now began to rain. Was almost sure

that he could identify the men if he saw them again.

The policemen were next sworn, but there was nothing very material in their evidence. Sergeant Cooper deposed to the state of the body when he arrived on the spot with his men. What seemed the strangest thing of all to him was the impression of fingers on the throat of the deceased. The finger-marks were plainly visible, the jury could see them now themselves. A large block of undressed limestone, close to where the head was lying, was covered with blood and hair; it was the hair of deceased; he had compared them. He had made careful measurements of the distance between the hedge and the body. The police had found no weapon of any kind. He had caused a rigid search to be made in all the adjoining fields, but without effect. The cabins of the peasantry near the place had also been carefully searched with a like result.

From the way in which the ground was trampled he should say there were more than

two persons engaged in the crime. Up to the present he was sorry to say they had obtained no clue to the perpetrators. Two men were under suspicion, but they had obtained no evidence against them. He would rather say no more on that point.

A little girl, between four and five years old, told a story to her father, a boatman on the river, of having seen two men fighting in the field where the murder was committed. She had been gleaning wheat in the next field, and had crouched under a corn-stack from the rain. She saw the two men fighting, and one of them fall; but there could not be much in her statement; for, on being questioned, she said that she saw the two men speaking to each other afterwards, on the same spot; and that they left the field in opposite directions; and that one of them wore a white coat, and had a gun on his shoulder.

The little girl was present; but, on being produced, and asked by the coroner if she knew the nature of an oath, the child got

frightened, and began to cry, and nothing could be extracted from her. No importance was attached to her story. It contradicted itself. The articles found on the person of the late baronet were then produced, and identified as his property.

The medical evidence was the last adduced. Doctor Dunne said that a messenger came for him on the Wednesday afternoon. He arrived at the police station, and made an examination of the deceased. Judged that he had been dead from four to six hours. The skull had been completely broken in, as if by a blow from some iron instrument, like a sledge hammer, or a crowbar. Did not think a bludgeon could have produced such an injury : the weapon, whatever it was, had completely entered the brain, which protruded from the wound. He also found bruises on the face and throat ; and there was a wound on the tongue, as if it had been caught between the teeth when the deceased was falling. But death resulted from injury to the brain.

The doctor gave his evidence in the orthodox medical style, using all the hard Latin phrases he could think of. No doubt he gave the jury and his hearers a profound idea of his great skill and vast learning, but we have translated the Latinisms into plain English, for the benefit of the less erudite reader.

Sir Arthur O'Neill was present, and ready to testify to the fact that Sir Bernard Carew had been at his residence for a short time on the morning of the murder, but the coroner told the jury he did not think he need trouble the distinguished gentleman. Mr. L'Estrange also was present, but, as he only arrived after the police, the coroner did not think his evidence necessary either.

Then came the coroner's summing up. He was a very little man, with short bow legs, a very bald head, very red face, and small bright eyes; he had been a village shopkeeper, had saved money, and prudently invested it in a 'bit' of land; he was a keen, active politician; had been a follower of the famous

O'Connell, and one of his Repeal wardens : was a great Priests' man ; and by their influence had been elected county coroner the year before, in opposition to the nominee of an influential Tory family.

The great occasion came to him and he seized it, nay, proved that he was worthy of it. Holding the inquest this day, the coroner was in his glory. He had a live baronet listening to him, and was sitting on a dead one. The majority of the jury before him were magistrates, and in the room were gentlemen and landlords brought together by a common interest, a common sympathy, and a common fear. He felt that he was master of the position. Every eye was fixed upon him ; every ear was listening to his words.

Many of those present had been his most bitter opponents, and had voted against him. No matter. He had the office, and could afford to be generous. He would seize the opportunity to make these magnates his friends. As he looked around him before he commenced

his address, there was a benignity, mingled with pity, in his smile, which told his hearers plainly enough—

‘Ah! gentlemen, I think you see the mistake you made. You opposed my election to this office, but you did it in ignorance. You will see what I can do now. Before you leave this room to-day, you will exclaim to each other, “Who would have thought it? What a man this Owen is! His county—Ireland herself—may well be proud of him.”’

Another man might have been overwhelmed by the grandeur of the occasion; but he rose with it, and knew that he was equal to it. If he was small in stature, his ideas were large. He esteemed the dignity of his office, and felt that of all the positions a man can occupy, that of a county coroner was one of the most tremendously important; and second only to that of the judges on the bench. Why, here was he, plain John Owen, a few years ago the owner of a grocer and tallow-chandler’s shop, who had dipped candles with his own hands,

and now he was discoursing to the first gentlemen in the county—the clergy, gentry, and nobility—upon the solemn issues of life and death, weighing probabilities, dissecting evidence, and directing them—yes, directing them—to find a true deliverance.

The reporters for the press were also present. His speech would be in the newspapers—(the ‘County Chronicle’ had two columns of it). The Dublin papers, especially the Conservative organs, would be sure to praise him for it. Even the great London journals would say something of him, perhaps report his remarks on the rights of property and the sacredness of life; especially of a baronet’s life; and thus his name would be wafted to the ends of the earth. Was not that greatness? Was not that fame? And the little man’s bald head was almost turned by his reflections.

The coroner’s summing up contained an elaborate eulogium on the late baronet; and in the course of it he managed to pay a compliment to every man of note in the room.

The jury came in for their share of flattery, and were informed that the eyes of the whole civilized world were fixed on them that day. The brutal and savage murder they were met to investigate, and if possible discover the authors of, was to be traced directly to that illegal association called Ribbonism, which had been denounced by the clergy of his own Church.

That conspiracy he did not hesitate to say was directed against the land, and the owners of land ('hear, hear,' from one of the jury); and they would know how to deal with it. Was it to be submitted to that landowners were not to be allowed to manage their property as they pleased? Sir Bernard Carew had fallen a victim, because he would not obey the behests of a band of assassins. It might be their own turn next. He, as an humble individual, and—if they would excuse him for the allusion—a small owner of land, felt a personal interest in this question; and in defence of the sacred rights of property he

was ready to offer his breast to the bullet or the knife, and fall a martyr for his country.

They had heard the evidence. Could they doubt for one moment why their excellent neighbour, and he hoped he might say their lamented friend, had been sacrificed? He need not allude to the absurd story invented for the child, but which broke down so lamentably, to the confusion of its authors. Childish innocence should not be pressed into the service of assassination. It was an attempt on the part of the peasantry to shield the real authors of this thrice-accursed deed. It was sought to make them believe that a gentleman in a light coat had taken Sir Bernard Carew's life. Was that, he asked them, a deed likely to be committed by a gentleman? The question was an insult to their understandings. It was an attempt to put them upon a false scent, which would not succeed. They knew that the sympathies of the peasantry were with the criminals; for whose punishment they must invoke the strong arm of the law. The nation

—the empire, expected this at their hands. They would fearlessly do their duty, and bring in their verdict.

A loud manifestation of applause greeted the conclusion of the coroner's address. The jury did not hesitate an instant, but brought in their verdict of 'Wilful Murder against some person or persons unknown.'

The coroner received the congratulations of the gentlemen present, on the able and impartial way in which he had discharged the duties of his onerous office. His political opponents admitted that they had been mistaken in him ; and even Archdeacon Smithson, one of the proudest men in the county, shook hands with him, although he was a Papist, declaring that his speech did him honour, and that he hoped to have the pleasure of his acquaintance. The Archdeacon afterwards remarked to Colonel Blennerhasset, 'that from the man's position and antecedents no one could have anticipated the

very proper sentiments to which they had just listened, and that he deserved encouragement.'

However, there were two persons in the room to whom the coroner's high-flown address was worse than nonsense, and who did not agree with the verdict of the jury, and these two persons were Robert O'Neill and Godfrey L'Estrange.

As the crowd left the room, the following colloquy took place between two strangers, who had listened attentively to the evidence given at the inquest.

'Well, Stinson, what do you say now?'

'That I have lost my son-in-law, Mr. Morton,' replied Stinson.

'He has bilked us, and no mistake!' said Morton.

'Your game is spoiled,' rejoined Stinson; 'and now, I'm off again to the United States.'

CHAPTER XLII.

AN ANXIOUS CONSULTATION.

DOCTOR YOUNG and Minnie, Mrs. Butler and Mark, were assembled in the sitting-room at The Beeches. They all looked anxious, and spoke to each other in whispers, for Tom lay dangerously ill in the next room, and they were expecting the arrival of the doctor—who had been sent for that morning—every moment. Doctor Griffin soon afterwards drove up to the door; and before entering the sick-room, was made fully acquainted with his patient's case.

It appeared from Mrs. Butler's lengthened statement, that her son had been on a visit with some friends in the county Limerick, and returned a few days ago. The day before he came home he had been out shooting; was caught in the great thunderstorm, and com-

pletely drenched: he had walked back to his friend's house, and neglected to change his clothes. He came home the next day, seized with a heavy cold; so hoarse that he was unable to speak, and racked by a fearful cough. Mrs. Butler had given him some simple remedies, but they had produced no effect. He had been feverish and sleepless of nights, and the cough had gradually got worse. That morning, when his brother Mark entered his bedroom, he found that he had just ruptured a blood-vessel; and he was so weak from loss of blood that he was scarcely able to speak. He had been lying almost at the point of death ever since.

The doctor found Tom in bed, looking pale and exhausted. His pulse was low and feeble; and every few minutes his whole frame was shaken by the dreadful cough. In answer to the doctor's questions, Tom said that he felt great pain in the chest, and that the cough distressed him exceedingly. The doctor looked grave when he returned to the sitting-room.

He said it was a very serious case, but that he would give no opinion until he had seen him again.

‘The first thing,’ continued the doctor, ‘to be attended to is the cough,’ and he sat down to write a prescription; ‘send this at once to my house, and get it made up. There is great local irritation, which must be lessened, for another attack of bleeding might prove fatal. You must keep him perfectly quiet. Give him no stimulants—nothing of an irritating nature to eat or drink. Milk, new-laid eggs, oysters, chicken broth, a little roast fowl, jellies — anything of a simple, mucilaginous nature is the best for him. I will call again to-morrow,’ and the doctor took his departure.

Now, Mrs. Butler had great faith in Doctor Griffin’s skill, but she had still greater faith in her own. During her husband’s lifetime she had dabbled a little in the healing art, and although, while he lived, she had not ventured beyond a specific for worms in children, and a cure for warts, since his death she had grown


bolder and more ambitious, and did not hesitate to prescribe in cases of greater importance. She thought that she had been eminently successful in cases of pleurisy, lumbago, and yellow jaundice. Scarcely a day passed that she was not consulted by some of the peasant women about these and other ailments; and they came to her the more willingly, because she was what they called, 'a larned woman intirely;' charged them no fee; listened patiently to the full accounts of their diseases; and gave them gratuitously the medicines she prescribed.

It must be said that Mrs. Butler's remedies had at least the merit of simplicity. For colds and fevers of all kinds her one remedy was, a small spoonful of saltpetre in a basin of gruel. Her cure for rheumatism—namely, a piece of cane-brimstone wrapped up in a piece of flannel, and tied to the left side, just above the hip, was never known to fail; or, if it did, the cures alone were written down by the recording angel, and the failures were mercifully forgotten.

She had a secret remedy for deafness, which she communicated only to persons of her own sex; and she was judicious in her treatment of those afflicted with whitlows, toothache, corns, and chilblains.

Mrs. Butler had all sorts of liniments, lotions, and ointments for scalds and burns, wounds and bruises. A piece of fine blue cloth reduced to ashes, she regarded as an invaluable cure for bleeding at the nose. And cobwebs she looked upon as the best and simplest, as certainly they were the cheapest, of styptics. But she was most renowned for her cough mixtures.

With lemons and liquorice-ball, sugar-candy and horehound, she concocted pleasant syrups, which soon became celebrated, and made one rather wish for a cough, for the pleasure of being cured by taking them. When the coughs were recent, she resorted to the syrups, with the additional prescription of three drinks of cold spring water, to be taken successively without drawing breath, every morning, fasting. If, in spite of these measures, the cough became



chronic, her grand reliance was on the juice of dandelion leaves and cuckoo-sorrel. . In these simple herbs she had more faith than in all the drugs mentioned in the London Pharmacopœia.

Indeed, upon the great dandelion question, Mrs. Butler even withstood her husband to the face. And when he asked scoffingly, what she knew about such matters? her conclusive answer was that she could not help knowing it, for her mother before her believed in it; and though he might toss his head incredulously, she would retain her faith in dandelion to the last.

So when Mrs. Butler heard Doctor Griffin say that the cough was the first thing to be attended to, she quietly resolved, that while she would not vex Mark and Tom by entirely neglecting or ignoring the doctor's prescription, she would, at the same time, induce the latter to take her own preparation also, as the more valuable of the two. Larry Doolan was at once despatched to the fields, and soon re-

turned with a whole sackful of the required herbs.

‘Now, my dear,’ said Mrs. Butler, addressing Minnie, while she pounded the leaves in a pestle and mortar, and poured off the dark green juice into a bottle for immediate use—‘now, my dear, you will see how soon this,’ pointing to the bottle, ‘will soften and relieve the cough—far sooner than the doctor’s drugs.’

‘Yes, mother,’ said Minnie—she had learned of late to call Mrs. Butler mother, to the great satisfaction of the old lady, who had been informed by Mark of what was looming in the future—‘and you must let me help you, because I am going to stay a good deal with you while Tom is ill. Father will not miss me much, and if you want any jams or preserves, we have plenty of them at home. While you are preparing these things for Tom, I will look after the house.’

‘Thank you, child,’ Mrs. Butler replied. ‘People may talk as they like about doctors. I am not going to say a word against them ;

for my own poor darling, that's gone from me, was the most skilful of them all. But sure I often heard my mother say, that her grandfather's brother's uncle—no, I am wrong; yes, I'm right—her grandfather's brother's uncle—he was only an uncle by marriage, though—one of the Pratts of Waterford; and they are all Orangemen—was brought from the verge of the grave by oysters and dandelion juice, when the doctors gave him up in a galloping consumption. I hope Tom won't refuse to take this from me. He is just as obstinate on such matters as his poor father. If it were Mark, I could easily manage him; but Tom has a will of his own. It has an unpleasant taste, to be sure—but not worse, I'm sure, than Guinness's porter: who would drink that, I should like to know, if it were given them as physic?'

To her delight Tom made no objection to the dose. 'I fear, mother,' he said, 'I have often been disobedient to you, but I'm going to be good now. I will be refractory no more. If I

do not get better, it will not be my fault ;' and he smiled faintly at her, as he swallowed the nauseous preparation without even making a wry face.

· ' Better ! of course you will get better, my dear. I ought to have got some of this ready for you the day you came home. I never knew it to fail yet. And I don't think it's going to fail with you,' Mrs. Butler answered.

But in this instance it did fail. All her syrups produced no effect ; the doctor's prescriptions were useless likewise. And Mrs. Butler saw, with alarm, that in spite of all her care and skill, Tom was rapidly growing worse ; his strength lessened, and his appetite failed.

Mark was busy finishing his harvest, but he was anxiously thinking of Tom all the time. He managed to kill a trout for his breakfast every morning, and brought home a partridge or a grouse for his dinner. Father Brady sent up a hare once or twice a week with his compliments, and tempting baskets of delicious fruit

came for the invalid from Ballyluce Castle. Doctor Griffin visited his patient daily, and finding that he was not improving under his care, suggested that further advice should be obtained.

‘I do not want to alarm you needlessly, Mr. Butler,’ the doctor said to Mark; ‘but your brother’s case is becoming serious. It really is. I am puzzled. There is something more in it than meets the eye; and I should like to have assistance. He is restless and nervous, and, in spite of all our efforts, is losing flesh rapidly. I should like Doctor Jacob, or some other physician, to see him.’

‘In that case, Mark,’ said Tom, when he had heard Griffin’s opinion, ‘I should like you to send for Doctor Power, only for the expense. I suppose his fee will not be less than thirty guineas. I don’t think it will be of much use, but at least it will satisfy the anxiety of mother’s mind and your own.’

‘Never mind the expense, Tom, I’ll write for him to-night,’ replied Mark. ‘You

cannot be in better hands,' and he wrote and posted his letter to Doctor Power that evening.

Two days afterwards Doctor Power came. Mark met him at the railway station, and on the road to The Beeches gave him a full account of his brother's illness. Tom quite brightened up when he heard the sound of Doctor Power's cheerful voice, and saw his kindly, smiling face at the door. There was something infectious in the doctor's cordial manner, and in the genial expression of his countenance, that had almost as much effect on his patients as his prescriptions.

'Why, my dear friend,' the doctor said, as he shook Tom by the hand, 'what's this I hear you have been doing to yourself? Getting wet, catching colds and coughs, and playing all kinds of pranks with your health!' And he sat down beside him. Doctor Griffin was in the room to meet the Dublin physician, and in a few sentences informed him of the particulars of the case, and of the various remedies that had been tried.

‘And now,’ said Doctor Power to Tom, as he applied the stethoscope to his chest, ‘I want you to talk away for the next few minutes. Tell me about your visit to Ballyluce! How are your friends the O’Neills? I thought by this time you would have been away, inhaling the breezes on the western coast. Does that hurt you? I see it does. And how is Miss O’Neill? What a charming girl she is! I wonder you are not in love with her. If I were a young man, I should be, head and ears. She is the most splendid creature I ever saw—the O’Neills are all a fine family. Frightful affair that murder of Carew! Were you there at the time? Don’t start; I will not hurt you, if I can help it. Have you pain here?—draw a long, deep breath. That’ll do.’ In a few moments more the examination was completed, and the two doctors retired into another room.

They remained in consultation about ten minutes. Doctor Power looked very grave as Griffin replied to his questions, and shook his head ominously, as the latter concluded his

account of the symptoms he had noticed. 'There are some features in his case,' said Doctor Griffin, 'for which I cannot account. I fancy he has some trouble or anxiety preying on his mind. The last few days, particularly, I have noticed great mental depression. He seems to take no interest in anything.'

'He has been a very hard student,' replied Doctor Power. 'No doubt he has been overworking his brain, and now he feels the reaction. I saw a good deal of him in College a few months ago, and even then, I warned him that he must be careful. He was suffering at the time from nervousness, and want of sleep; and I imagine he has not thoroughly recovered since. I certainly am perplexed at the change in his appearance; but we must not despair yet.'

When Doctor Power returned to the room where Mark and Mrs. Butler were anxiously awaiting him, his face had resumed its usual cheerful smile.

‘ I highly approve of everything that Doctor Griffin has done,’ he said, in answer to their looks of inquiry. ‘ Nothing could be better. You may pursue the same course of treatment. However, we may try another mixture to remove the cough. You have only to keep him perfectly quiet, and give him plenty of nourishment. How is his appetite ? ’

In answer to the last question, Mrs. Butler gave the doctor a long account of everything she had given Tom to eat and drink, including the syrups, the dandelion juice, and the Carriegen moss. She laid great stress on the latter, as having been held in high esteem by her mother and her aunts. To all of which Doctor Power listened patiently, and replied :—

‘ Very good, my dear madam ; very good, indeed ; the more of these things you can get him to take the better. It is a question of loss and supply. If the supply be greater than the waste, we win. If the waste be greater than the supply, we lose. That’s about it, doctor, is it not ? ’

Doctor Griffin respectfully bowed his assent.

‘I wish,’ Doctor Power continued, ‘we could get him to a warmer climate for the winter. If he does not improve shortly, I would advise you to remove him to the Cove of Cork, or Queenstown, I should say. The old name, however, runs in my head. The climate there is milder than it is here. The place is sheltered from the north and north-east winds. Several of my patients, with weak lungs, are living there, and they find it suits them admirably. If I have an idle day next week I will come down again to see him.’

The doctor willingly accepted Mrs. Butler’s invitation to take some luncheon before he left. ‘You must know, Mrs. Butler,’ he said, ‘that your husband and I were old, old friends, and so I make myself quite at home with you. Those were happy days, when we were light-hearted, merry students together. See what changes time brings with it! And as an old friend of the family,’ continued the doctor, ‘I have taken the privilege of one, and ordered a

few dozen of prime old claret I have at home to be packed up and sent to your address, for the use of our invalid inside. I dare say you will find it at the railway station in the morning if you will be good enough to send for it. It is as good a thing as you can give him.'

Both Mark and Mrs. Butler were loud in their expressions of thanks. 'Oh, how kind and thoughtful of you, doctor!' the good lady exclaimed. 'We are deeply grateful to you.'

'Not at all, my dear madam. It's only a French compliment. I have more of it than I shall ever drink; and I knew you would have some difficulty in getting good wine in a country place like this.'

When the doctor rose to go, Mark put an envelope into his hand, saying, 'Doctor, I cannot express my thanks. Here are thirty guineas. I know it is not your proper fee for coming such a distance. I wish I could afford to make it fifty.'

'What for? This for me?' the doctor asked,

as he held the envelope a moment in his fingers, and then handed it back to Mark, who refused to take it.

‘But you must,’ said the doctor firmly, as he forced the money back upon him. ‘Not for the world, my dear sir! Tut, tut, not a shilling! I came to see Friend Tom for friendship, not for a fee; and a fee, I tell you once more, I will not take. If your poor father were living, do you think I would charge for coming to see him? Certainly not. And I am sure I am not going to charge for coming to see his son. I mean to pay you another visit soon. I must now be off,’ he added in conclusion, pulling out his watch: ‘I have just time to catch the up mail.’ And having wished them all good-by, the kind-hearted doctor was in a few minutes on his way back to Dublin, leaving the Butler family overwhelmed with gratitude for his thoughtfulness and generosity.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AT THE BEECHES.

WHILE Tom was away on his visit with the O'Neills, Mark had fitted up the surgery as a sitting-room for him, where he might pursue his studies without interruption. With the aid of Larry Doolan, he had re-papered the room, re-painted the door and windows; polished up the old bookcase that had belonged to his father, and arranged the books on the shelves; put up new blinds and hangings, so that, when Tom returned rather unexpectedly from Ballyluce Castle, he found a comfortable study prepared for him, and the old room looking more bright and cheerful than it had appeared even in his father's time.

There Tom lay on a sofa at the window, during the long, bright, September days—watching the clouds sailing across the sky—the sunbeams

playing amongst the trees—or looking out on Mark's glowing beds of scarlet geraniums and splendid dahlias ; while his mother and Minnie Young, supplied all his wants with loving solicitude and tender care. Tom could not help contrasting the peace and calm that reigned about him, in the old quiet home, with the raging war between his own conflicting thoughts.

He had not as yet said anything to either his mother or Mark respecting his engagement to Helen O'Neill. From the first, he had felt a singular disinclination to mention her name to them ; a feeling which he explained to himself on the ground that it would be better not to excite their expectations until he was sure they would be fulfilled ; and now, that this terrible chasm had opened between Helen and himself, he felt less disposed than ever to speak of her to them.

Yet he was obliged to give them some explanation ; for letters were coming for him every day to The Beeches from Helen O'Neill.

He saw that the correspondence had excited their curiosity, although they had not questioned him on the subject. Mrs. Butler had made her own comments to Minnie on all the letters that came addressed for Tom in the handwriting of Miss O'Neill, and both the ladies had already put their heads together, and drawn their own conclusions from the fact.

One morning, when Mark as usual handed him a letter from Helen, remarking, 'I hope, my dear Tom, all these letters mean something.'


Tom seized on the opportunity and told Mark how matters stood between himself and Helen. 'It began months ago, Mark, when the O'Neills were in College. You may remember that I said to you at the time I would have something to tell you about them one day or other. That's what I meant. The engagement between Miss O'Neill and myself has continued ever since. It came to the knowledge of her relations the other day, and they would not listen to it for a moment. In fact, there was a scene at the Castle between myself

and Lady O'Neill the evening before I left ; and that's what made me come back so suddenly. She taunted me, perhaps justly, with my presumption. Sir Arthur even politely requested me to leave his house ; and, of course, I took him at his word.'

But Tom said not one word to his brother, of his fatal rencounter with Sir Bernard Carew.

'I was mad enough, Mark,' said Tom, in conclusion, 'to indulge in the beautiful dream, but it is not to be. I must think of Miss O'Neill no more. While her friends are so much opposed to it—for which I do not blame them—it is folly to indulge the thought. My pride is as great an obstacle in the way as theirs.'

'Is that it, Tom, my dear boy ?' said Mark, sitting down by the bed, and looking affectionately at his brother : 'I knew there was something on your mind, although I did not like to ask you. Doctor Griffin said so too. Now I see it all. I wondered the day



after you came home to see you looking so gloomy and depressed. When I told you the next day about Sir Bernard Carew's murder you took no interest in it. I was so excited by the news, that the moment I saw it in the paper I rushed home to tell you, but you would scarcely listen to me, and turned your face to the wall. I did not know at the time that you had your own troubles on your mind. And is there no hope in this matter, Tom ?'

At the mention of Carew's name Tom groaned again. It reminded him that his case was utterly desperate, and of the irrevocable consequences of his rash act; for he answered, 'No, Mark! I have no hope. There is nothing left for me but despair—nothing to do, but to lie down and die.'

And as Tom spoke the last words, there was such an expression of hopeless misery in his face, such anguish in the tones of his voice, that poor Mark's heart quite sank within him as he exclaimed,—

'Oh, Tom, don't say that! You must not

talk of dying, unless you want to break our hearts.'

'I feel it, Mark! I shall never be happy again,' Tom rejoined, mournfully.


'But, you know, Tom, you must not abandon yourself to despair. There is no one without hope. Besides, you may marry Miss O'Neill yet,' Mark observed.

Tom shook his head. 'There is not the slightest chance of that, Mark. Not the least. If I thought that possible, it would soon make me well again.'

'Is Miss O'Neill herself willing that the engagement between you should be broken off?' Mark asked.

'So far from wishing the engagement broken off she insists on its fulfilment,' said Tom; 'but, in the face of the opposition of all her friends, how can I ask her to keep her promise?'

'I think she must be favourably disposed towards you, or she would not write so constantly,' rejoined Mark.



‘I want you, Mark,’ added Tom; ‘to break the matter to mother—of course you may tell Minnie also. Make as light of it as you possibly can. Tell them not to speak of it to others; and ask mother not to discuss the subject with me, or indeed mention it. You will understand how painful it must be to me. The less said about it the better.’

‘Yes, I’ll tell them both,’ said Mark. ‘Minnie, I suppose, will inform the doctor—and he will be as much grieved to hear it as I am myself. I must warn mother not to touch upon the subject at all in your hearing, for you know, if she once begins upon a topic, it is not easy to stop her. My dear Tom, I am greatly pained at what you tell me. Your story has grieved me to the heart. But, my dear brother, cheer up! Do not give way to despair! Who can tell what turn events may take?’ And Mark left the room.

Next to his grief on account of Helen, perhaps the heaviest part of Tom’s trial was that he was unable to take either Mark or Doctor

Young into his confidence—that he was obliged to bear his burden alone. Several times he resolved that he would tell them what he had done; but, when the time came, he shrank instinctively from the task. He knew that he stood high in the good opinion of both, and he could not bear the idea of losing their esteem—of forfeiting their love.

How could he tell them that he had killed Sir Bernard Carew? How could he confess to the doctor that in a moment of ungovernable passion he had stained his hands with blood? He imagined what the good doctor's horror and consternation would be! He saw poor Mark overwhelmed with grief and shame! And the picture sealed his lips. How could he inflict such pain on these two simple, unsuspecting souls?

‘I will keep the knowledge of my crime to myself,’ he thought. ‘Better I should endure the punishment of my guilt, than that they should suffer. Besides, I may not live long. I think my race is nearly run. I have now no

hope of gaining the only object that would make life desirable. If I die, let them at least be ignorant of the fatal event that has destroyed my peace, and caused my death.'

Influenced by these considerations, Tom refrained from informing Mark of the real facts of the case, and allowed the latter to think that his melancholy arose solely from the opposition of the O'Neills to his marriage with Helen. Nor was Mark surprised at the intensity of Tom's feeling, when he thought of what his own sensations had been at the prospect of losing Minnie Young.

It will be remembered, that the night before Tom left Ballyluce Castle, O'Neill had a long conversation with him, and induced Tom to promise that he would correspond with Helen as before, and allow him to make her acquainted with all the particulars of Sir Bernard Carew's death. But, although Tom allowed himself to be persuaded, he was not convinced. On the journey home he saw the mistake he had made; and no sooner had he arrived at The Beeches,

than he wrote a long letter to O'Neill, reiterating all the arguments he had used the night before: entreating him not to inform Helen of his having caused Carew's death: and declaring his fixed determination not to compromise his cousin further by continuing the engagement. 'Better,' he said, in conclusion, 'that Helen should think me false and fickle, than that she should be involved in my probable disgrace and ruin. It would be cruel and unjust of me to entangle her any further in my fate. I shall make the conversation that took place in the library last evening, between her uncle and aunt and myself, my justification. I shall tell her that I cannot consent to enter a family the heads of which despise me: that my pride will not allow me to form connections with those who look down upon me as their social inferior.

'Better she should think anything of me—believe anything—than know the truth. Suppose that discovery should come—and I shall live in constant fear of it—imagine Helen

O'Neill's husband standing as a criminal in the dock! The very thought of it almost drives me mad. That is a degradation to which your cousin must not be exposed. Do not, I beseech you, try to shake my resolution, for it is unalterable.

‘In saying this I know I am cutting myself off from happiness—from hope—perhaps, from life itself. Henceforward, I shall have no motive to live. My sun is well-nigh set. I feel the bitterness of death already. But in life or death, my love for Helen shall be the same. I even believe that it was more happiness than I deserved to have known her—to have loved her—to have been loved by her in return. I only know now—that I have lost her for ever—how entirely, how devotedly I loved her! To yourself, I am under obligations that words cannot express. I can only ask you now in conclusion, to forget that ever you had a friend in unfortunate

‘T. S. BUTLER.’

By return of post, Tom received a long letter from O'Neill, in which the writer strongly combated all the arguments that he had advanced. He ridiculed Tom's fear of discovery, declaring that there was no probability, scarcely the possibility, of more being known than came out on the inquest—the universal opinion being, that Carew had been murdered in revenge for his wholesale evictions. He argued that, even if everything were discovered, Tom would be in no danger, as Carew had struck the first blow.

‘I saw L'Estrange yesterday,’ continued the writer, ‘and we thoroughly understand each other. He seemed to know all about your affair with Helen (though how he found it out I cannot tell), and expressed the warmest sympathy for you both. I rely on his honour fully. He will be true as gold. I had the greatest difficulty in dragging any admission from him. It was most amusing to see the way he fenced with me, until he saw that I knew everything.’

‘L’Estrange thinks with me that Helen should be made acquainted with all the facts. I urged this course upon you here—more on her account even than your own. I urge the same course still. Nothing that you have said has altered my opinion in the least. A full and candid statement to her is the only safe course. But if you try to keep back the truth from her, or deceive her in any way, you will be sorry.

‘To try and break your engagement with her, on account of, or under the pretence of, my father’s or mother’s opposition, is the sheerest folly. She will scatter all your sophistries and pretences like chaff before the wind. I have not informed her yet, because she has been ill. Nor will I tell her until I have a good opportunity, for I know very well what she will do the moment she hears of it.

‘She has been confined to her room since you left. My father went up to see her this morning, and she rated him soundly for his cruelty and inhospitality to you. She refused to speak


to my mother at all. I never saw mother so subdued and cowed before. Even Miss Dillon's great talents as a peacemaker, failed signally on this occasion. Helen complained to me a few hours since that she had not heard from you to-day. I dared not show her your letter. Write to her as usual.

‘Ever yours,

‘R. A. O’NEILL.’

If Tom's letter failed to convince O'Neill, the reply of the latter equally failed to satisfy Butler. Tom, indeed, acted on his advice, and wrote to Helen as before; but nothing could convince him that he was justified in linking her fate to his.

Through the long, bright autumn days he lay hovering on the confines between life and death. Stretched on a sofa at the surgery window, he gazed out upon the withering flowers and the falling leaves; and, as he watched the glory of the departing year, he wondered to himself whether he should live to see its close.



During those days Doctor Young was Tom's constant companion. He came every day to The Beeches, and spent many an hour with his old pupil. He beguiled the time by talking of the old times and of their former studies. He spoke to Tom of his College friends and rivals, and in a thousand ways endeavoured to make him forget his sorrow. From the moment of Tom's return from Ballyluce Castle, the doctor's quick eye saw that there was something wrong with him, but with rare delicacy, he forebore to press him for the disclosures or explanations which he was unwilling himself to make. The doctor was not surprised, therefore, when he heard from Minnie of Tom's disappointment about Miss O'Neill; and he determined to redouble his exertions to lessen his grief and distract his thoughts.

In the evenings they all assembled in Tom's room, and Minnie sang the old familiar hymns, which brought back to his remembrance the happy days at Middlemount, or the doctor read and expounded from *The Book*; and, before

they separated for the night, offered one of those solemn and fervent appeals to Heaven, which more than anything else had the power to still the raging tumult of Tom's mind, and calm his troubled soul.

When the doctor was not with him, or when he was alone, Tom's thoughts instantly reverted to Helen, and the happiness he had lost. He lived over again the blissful hours he had spent with her at Ballyluce Castle. He shut his eyes and thought of the morning drives, the boatings on the river, the evening rambles, the moonlight walks, the long conversations in the drawing-room. He recalled the pleasant times in College, where he met Helen first, and the happy days they spent in sight-seeing ; or he felt a joy that was ever new in the memory of the scene in the cemetery at Glassnevin ; and then, in the midst of the delightful reverie, or ecstatic dream, his thoughts would suddenly be hurried, as if by an irresistible force, to the field near the Shannon, where the fatal struggle occurred between himself and Sir Bernard

Carew, the terrible consequences of which never failed to strike and appal his imagination.

He heard daily from Helen now : and every succeeding letter was, if possible, more tender, and breathed a deeper devotion than its predecessor. In one of these she told Tom that she had been to the Abbey that day with her cousin, to order certain changes and improvements to be made that she thought would please him. In the next, wild with delight, she informed him that her uncle had that morning given his consent to their marriage ; that her aunt had sullenly acquiesced ; that Sir Arthur was to write to him by the next post ; and that he was to come at once to Ballyluce.

‘It is clear then,’ said Tom to himself, ‘that O’Neill has not yet told her the fatal news.’ Tom had not let Helen know how very ill he had been. For a long time he had abandoned himself to despair, and believed that he would die. But, as he read Helen’s last letter, hope

revived within him once more, and he felt a strong and fierce desire that he might live—live to requite her affection, and make her happy. He was busily occupied with these thoughts when a carriage and pair dashed up to the door, from which descended Helen and O'Neill, and in another moment Helen was clasped in Tom's arms.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MARK BUTLER'S ARREST.

MONTHS have elapsed. Tom and Helen, Miss Dillon and O'Neill, are in Italy. They have spent the winter months in Naples. They lived in a furnished villa near Posillipo, and from the drawing-room windows they had a glorious view of Vesuvius, the city, and the bay. The house was built upon the very edge of a rock; the balconies overhung the sea; and a flight of steps, cut in the face of the cliff, led down to the water, where a boat lay moored. The balmy air of the South had restored the flush of health to Tom's wasted cheek, and given renewed vigour to his enfeebled frame. Love had done for Tom what the doctors were unable to accomplish—it had 'ministered to the mind diseased'—and the light of Helen's eyes had rekindled the hopes

that he had thought for ever extinguished in his heart.

The time passed quickly in boating about the bay—in excursions to the islands of Ischia and Capri—in exploring the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii—in driving around the lovely shores of Baiæ, and in visiting the palaces and galleries of art in Naples. In these varied and pleasant occupations, accompanied by his friends, Tom gathered fresh strength daily; and before the spring had passed, all fears about his health were set at rest. They had been a week at Florence and a month at Rome; and were thinking of turning their steps homeward, when L'Estrange joined the party at Naples.

‘And when did you hear from Tom?’ inquired Doctor Young one fine Sunday morning, when he and Minnie called at The Beeches on their way to the chapel, where the doctor was to preach.

‘I had a letter from him this morning, doctor,’ answered Mark. ‘He is getting on

famously. A Mr. L'Estrange, a College friend of his, had just arrived at Naples; and the day after he wrote they were all to start for Palermo in Mr. L'Estrange's yacht. I am not to write until I hear from him again, as he does not know where a letter will reach him. He says we may expect him home in three weeks, or a month; but that, at all events, he will be here by the appointed day. Minnie, dear,' said Mark, in conclusion, as he handed Tom's letter to her, 'Mr. O'Neill is coming to our wedding.'

Minnie blushed as she took the letter, and sat down at the window to read it.

'Who are these men,' cried Mark, 'coming across the lawn? Why, I declare, it's Captain White, the sub-inspector of police, with four of his men. What can they want, I wonder?'

He was not left long in doubt, for in a few seconds Captain White entered the sitting-room. The constables were about to follow their officer, but he motioned them to remain outside. The sub-inspector gravely bowed to

Mrs. Butler and Minnie, and then shook hands with Dr. Young and Mark.

Mark was struck with the pained and anxious look of the police-officer, for he exclaimed, 'Why, Captain White, what is the matter? Are you ill?'

'I cannot say that I am well, Mr. Butler,' the captain answered, looking round upon the group mournfully. 'What I have to tell you has almost made me ill.'

'What is it?' they all inquired at the same moment.

'That's what I am so much afraid to tell you,' answered Captain White, slowly. 'As an old and intimate friend of yours, Mr. Butler, who has known you so many years, and esteemed you highly, I know not how to break the dreadful intelligence to you.'

'What on earth can it be?' cried Mark. 'Tell me at once! What is it?'

'Well then, my dear friend,' replied White, with an effort, 'I have come to arrest you—there!'

'Arrest me!' exclaimed Mark, as he opened his eyes very wide, and looked at Captain White with a curious smile, 'for what, may I ask?' And he gave a quiet laugh.

'For murder!' answered White, in a low voice, 'for the wilful murder of Sir Bernard Carew, your late landlord. I am obliged to tell you that you are my prisoner.'

Dr. Young started. 'Remember, sir,' he said to the captain, solemnly, 'that this is the Sabbath-day. I know you are fond of joking; but this is carrying the joke too far.'

'Would to Heaven it were a joke, doctor!' cried the police officer, earnestly, 'but I am serious.'

'And you want to arrest me for the murder of Sir Bernard Carew?' asked Mark, as he looked around him incredulously from one to another, but with more of surprise than alarm in his face.

'Ay, you may well be surprised!' answered White, 'I should be inclined to laugh at the mere supposition as monstrous and absurd—as

too ridiculous to think about—only that informations have been sworn against you ; and here is the warrant for your arrest.’

Mark took the document, and looked at it vacantly. He did not read it, however, but handed it back the next moment to White, observing, ‘there must be some horrible mistake in all this.’

‘Of course there must,’ replied White ; ‘some awful blunder. I know you had no more to do with the murder of Sir Bernard Carew than I had, or the good doctor here. Your servant, Doolan, is accused with you. He is now at the barracks. The whole village is in commotion on account of his arrest. The people did not know I was coming for you. I thought the more quietly the thing was done the better. I wished to spare your feelings as much as possible.’

‘Thanks ! many thanks, captain !’ said Mark ; ‘I suppose I must go with you.’

‘Yes,’ White answered, ‘we must go before a magistrate. Let us get away quietly, if we

can. I see people collecting on the road below already. My car is at your gate.'

'You are right,' Mark replied. 'I am quite ready.' And his heart sank within him as he spoke.

Mrs. Butler and Minnie Young had both listened to the foregoing conversation without fully comprehending its import. They only knew that a vague feeling of terror had seized upon them, which deprived them of all power of speech and thought. They looked at each other with an expression of horror as they heard Mark—their Mark—accused of murder. Their faces blanched to a more deadly paleness as Captain White spoke of sworn informations that Mark had killed Sir Bernard Carew; but neither of them uttered a word until they found that he was going to be taken from them.

The captain's proposal that they should be going, and Mark's response, broke the spell. Mrs. Butler tottered over between Mark and the inspector, and seizing an arm of each, she

said to the latter, in a voice of unnatural calmness,—

‘Mr. White, what do you mean? you will not take away my son from me? Say you will not! He is innocent! I cannot let him go! Send these men away!’ and her lips grew white, and her fingers clutched his arm convulsively, as she spoke.

‘My dear madam,’ said the kind-hearted policeman, ‘I have no choice in the matter. I am quite powerless, I assure you. I never performed so unpleasant a duty in my life. I would willingly go a thousand miles to escape it. Your son, I hope, will not be long away.’

‘Mark, my dear,’ said the poor lady, releasing her hold of the inspector, and throwing her arms around her son’s neck, ‘Mark, my dear! you will not leave me! Why do they want to take you from me? You will not leave your poor mother!’

‘My darling mother,’ said Mark, making a desperate effort to control his feelings, ‘it is all a cruel mistake, which will soon be set to

rights. I must go now ; but I shall soon come back again. For my sake, try and be calm. There is nothing to fear, dear mother. Minnie will stay with you till I return,' and while he tried to soothe and comfort her, he felt her weight increase ; her arms became more rigid, and looking down at the poor white face, he saw that she had fainted. Aided by the doctor, Mark carried her to the sofa, and gently laid her down, while Minnie bravely dried her tears, and busied herself in efforts to restore her.

'Minnie,' said Mark, while she was applying restoratives to his mother, 'I know you will not leave her till I return ;' and then turning to the doctor, he continued, 'How fortunate, doctor, that you were both here ! If I should not be allowed to return—for I know not what they may do to me—you will come and see me ? Oh, that my brother Tom were here ! Unfortunately, I do not know where a letter will find him.'

'Yes, my son,' rejoined the doctor, 'the

moment I can soothe and tranquillize these poor afflicted ones, I will take measures for your safety and vindication. Tom, too, shall be informed of all that has occurred as soon as possible. In the meantime, Mark, put your trust in Him who is "a strong tower of defence. A very present help in time of trouble. "'

Then Mark stooped down over his mother's yet unconscious form and kissed her; fondly embraced the weeping Minnie; wrung the doctor's hand, and with the policemen left the house.

An hour or so afterwards, Minnie persuaded Mrs. Butler to go to bed, while she sat by her and watched her; and the doctor was yet anxiously debating with himself what steps he should take next, when Father Brady knocked at the door.

'My dear sir,' said the doctor, addressing the priest, 'I am so glad you have come. I was just this moment thinking of calling on you. I want your aid and counsel on a matter

of very great importance. You know, of course, what has happened to Mark.'

'Why, Doctor Young,' said Father Mat, 'what extraordinary story is this I hear about Mr. Butler and Larry Doolan? Is it true that they have been arrested?'

'It is too true, unfortunately, Father Brady,' replied the doctor. 'Mr. White took poor Mark away from us more than an hour ago. His mother has been very ill since. She is now in her room completely prostrated with grief. My daughter is with her. We are all in great trouble, my dear sir,' added the doctor, as he looked imploringly at the priest.

'Surely! surely!' rejoined Father Brady, 'what can I do to help you? Command me in any way, doctor. But first tell me the particulars of this strange affair. Accused, I hear they are, of having murdered Sir Bernard Carew. Is that the fact?'

'Sit down,' replied the doctor, 'and I will tell you;' and he related all that had taken

place between Mark and the sub-inspector of police.

The priest planted his walking-stick firmly between his knees, rested his chin on the handle, and looking intently at the doctor, heard him without interruption to the end.

‘You do astonish me,’ cried the priest, when the doctor had concluded. ‘I laugh to think that anyone should be fool enough to suspect Mark Butler, of all the men in this world, of having committed murder! They might as well suspect the Pope,’ and he brought his stick down on the floor by way of emphasis.

‘How could the monstrous suspicion have originated? What could have given rise to it?’ asked the doctor.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Father Brady, ‘unless it be a plot to get the blood-money. The Government offered a large reward; the county offered another—six or seven hundred pounds altogether—for such information as might lead to the arrest and conviction of Carew’s murderers. That’s a large sum, doctor!

Many an innocent man's life has been sworn away for half the amount. Some wretched men are at work in this instance for the sake of the reward, I have no doubt.'

'If that be the case, Mark's danger is all the greater,' observed the doctor, with alarm.

'No doubt,' rejoined Father Brady; 'men who traffic in blood will swear anything. They'll stick at nothing. No man's life is secure against them—the wretches!'


'What would you advise me to do?' inquired the doctor. 'I am not accustomed to emergencies of this kind. The scene of this morning has quite unnerved me, and you know Mark's brother is from home. Something must be done for Mark immediately.'

'I know,' answered Father Mat, musingly. 'I am glad to hear that Mr. Tom is so much better, though. I tell you what, doctor,' added the priest, with sudden energy, 'the very best thing you can do is to come with me at once to Attorney Phelan, of Lisduff. It's only seven miles from this. We will get there in

an hour. Tell him the whole case, and leave Mr. Butler's defence, choice of lawyers, everything, in his hands. Be guided entirely by his advice. He is one of the cleverest men in Ireland, and an honest attorney, if there be one at all.'


It would not be easy to describe Mark Butler's feelings that night, when after a long and tiresome journey, he found himself a prisoner in Limerick gaol—fully committed, with Larry Doolan, to take his trial for the murder of Sir Bernard Carew. From the moment of his arrest by Captain White, during his examination before the magistrate, on the road to the prison, while he was being searched by the gaolers, Mark seemed like one in a dream. It was only when he entered his cell, and heard the door locked on him by the turnkey, that he awoke to the reality of his position; and was able connectedly to review the events of the last few miserable hours.

He felt no alarm for his own safety, or that of his unfortunate servant. The consciousness



of his innocence saved him from all apprehension on that score. Indeed, he smiled as he thought of the absurd, the monstrous charge that had been brought against him. But the feeling of innocence did not make his suffering less acute, or remove his sense of humiliation. His first thoughts were of Minnie and his mother. He pictured to himself Minnie's passionate grief, and his mother's wild despair. He knew what they would suffer when they found he did not return home, nor was he forgetful of the anguish in the doctor's face as he left The Beeches that morning.

Then he thought of Tom, and felt a still sharper pang. For the moment he rejoiced that his brother was away, and had been spared the pain of witnessing his disgrace. But it was only for a moment. He remembered that Tom must hear of it all ere long, and he shrank from the thought of the shame that his proud soul would feel. What would the O'Neills say? Mark could not tell what disastrous effect his misfortune might have upon his brother's



prospects; or what injury he might be the unwilling cause of to him. And as he thought that he was a prisoner—in a common gaol—accused of murder—that his name would be in all the newspapers, and a theme for gossip—that he was separated from those he loved—his fortitude gave way, and the strong man, like a little child, sobbed himself to sleep.

Mark was silently brooding over the same topics the next day, and lamenting his hard fate, when, to his intense delight, Doctor Young, Father Brady, and Attorney Phelan were ushered into his cell.

‘Here we are, Mr. Butler,’ said Father Brady, gaily. ‘Doctor Young and I have come on a visit to you, and you see we have brought Mr. Phelan, of Lisduff, with us. If there be one man in Ireland capable of setting right this unfortunate mistake, Mr. Phelan here is the man. He will soon get you out of this, I promise you.’

‘Father Brady is a partial friend, Mr. Butler,’ rejoined the attorney, addressing Mark; ‘he

may overrate my ability, but he cannot speak too strongly of my wish to serve you.'

'I am quite sure of that, Mr. Phelan,' said Mark, who was slightly acquainted with the lawyer.

'I have just seen the Crown Solicitor,' continued the attorney, 'and obtained from him a copy of the informations that have been sworn against you. He tells me they intend to put you on your trial at the coming assizes, which commence this day three weeks; unless we particularly wish for a postponement.'

'The sooner the better,' replied Mark; 'I have no wish for a postponement. Three weeks in a place like this will seem to me an age. It will kill me if I remain here much longer.'

'In that case,' observed the attorney, 'we have no time to lose. We must prepare for your defence at once. I find,' he added, as he opened the documents he had just obtained at the office of the Crown Solicitor, and looked over them, 'that all the evidence against you is purely circumstantial. I want you now to collect

your thoughts, and answer me a few questions. Be as particular as you can, for I am going to write down your replies.'

'Certainly,' replied Mark. 'Fortunately I have nothing to conceal.'

'Sir Bernard Carew was murdered on the 23rd of last August. Do you remember where you were on that day?' Mr. Phelan inquired.

'I do well,' answered Mark. 'I was on my way home from Limerick that morning with Larry Doolan. We must have passed close to the place where Sir Bernard was murdered.'

'Are you quite sure about the date? Think again, my dear sir. May you not have been mistaken?' Phelan asked anxiously. 'Did you not return some other day? Take your own time, and refresh your memory.'

'No,' Mark replied positively. 'There can be no mistake. I am quite certain. Besides, Tom returned home unexpectedly the next day—the 24th—it was his birthday. That's how I happen to remember the date so well.'

'Where were you on the 22nd, then?' in-

quired Phelan. 'The day before the murder of Carew?'

'I was at the fair of Newport,' answered Mark, without the least hesitation.

'How did you travel, and who was with you?' was the attorney's next question.

'No one but Doolan,' Mark replied. 'We went on horseback. We left my house late on the night of the 21st, in order to be in time for the fair. It was a long ride—over thirty miles. I wanted to buy a few store bullocks, but there was nothing at the fair to suit me. We rode into Limerick that night and slept there. I had some business in the city, and after I transacted it, the next morning we started for home.'

'Well,' groaned the attorney, as if in despair, 'and what happened to you on the journey?'

'We were caught in a fearful storm,' replied Mark. 'The thunder frightened the mare that Doolan rode; she shied and threw him—cutting him severely about the head and face. As the rain continued a long time, we took shelter in a public-house by the roadside. When the

storm ceased, we set out again, and reached my house shortly after nightfall. I don't know that I have anything more to tell.'

'Then,' said the attorney, 'we cannot prove an *alibi*. That chance is lost to us, I see.'

'We cannot prove an *alibi*,' rejoined Mark. 'Nor do we wish to prove one. Why, indeed, should we? What have I to fear, because we cannot prove a falsehood?'

'Because,' answered Phelan, 'you do not understand how very unfortunate for yourself everything that you have just told us is; or how, in skilful hands, it may be used with fatal effect against you. I was in hopes we might be able to prove that you were not in the locality at all on that particular day.'

'I have told you nothing but the truth,' Mark said simply.

'We do not doubt that for a moment, Mr. Butler,' remarked Father Brady. 'You have never told anything else.'

'And the truth is mighty, and will prevail,' exclaimed the doctor, with enthusiasm.

‘Yes! yes! The truth is very well in its way,’ said the attorney, testily. ‘I have every respect for the truth; but then it must be the whole truth. I don’t like partial truth; or false appearances, that lie like truth. And it’s with partial truth, and false appearances, that we have to deal in this instance. Because Mr. Butler and his servant happened to be on the road between Limerick and Ossory the day Sir Bernard Carew was murdered, that is no reason why they should be convicted of the murder. Is it?’ Phelan asked the priest.

‘You seem to think, then, that the case is serious?’ Father Brady inquired in turn.

‘I do. I believe fully, and implicitly, every word that Mr. Butler has uttered. But Mr. Butler is a man of sense, as well as a man of truth; and I do not see the use of concealing from him the danger in which he stands,’ the attorney answered, gravely.

‘I did not know, till this moment, that I was in danger,’ Mark observed, quietly.

‘You see,’ continued the shrewd lawyer,

‘Mr. Butler suspects no danger, *because* he is innocent. But if the attorney-general should come down to prosecute; and I have no doubt he will; and that he has to tell the story to a jury of landlords—he will be sure to pack the jury, for Carew’s murder created a great sensation at the time, and the Government will stop at nothing to obtain a conviction—how will the case appear as stated plausibly by him? Here is a tenant who has been put out of his farm by his landlord; the tenant sends the landlord a threatening letter—’

‘Nay,’ interrupted Mark, ‘it was not a threatening letter, but a friendly one. I wrote to tell him, that from facts that had come to my knowledge, I thought his life was in danger, and warning him to be careful. It is true he had cruelly injured me, but I meant to return him good for evil.’

‘No doubt your intention was good,’ answered Phelan, ‘but the better your intention, the worse Fitzmaurice will make it to appear. Wait till J. D. Fitz reads that letter to the

jury, and you will see that he will make it out the strongest and most telling evidence against you. He will so twist every fact; so misrepresent every occurrence; so colour everything you have said and done; and so artfully weave his web around you, that he will almost persuade yourself that you are guilty. A plausible tongue has J. D. F., Her Majesty's Attorney-General.'

'What counsel do you intend to employ against him?' inquired the priest.

'There is no choice,' the attorney replied. 'We have lawyers by the score in Ireland: but only one great advocate. There is one man, however—if we can only get him to read his brief,—who can be still more plausible than the attorney-general; who can excel him in his own line; beat him in argument; crush him with logic; confound him with law; and annihilate him with invective; a man who, if he be yet only a practising barrister, instead of being Lord Chancellor, has himself alone to blame. In a word, a man who has genius—

the only man of genius at the Irish bar, and that man is Isaac Hutt. I must send him a retainer to-night with a cheque for a hundred guineas.'

'I have not a hundred guineas in the world!' exclaimed Mark, in affright.

'Make your mind easy upon that point, Mark,' said the doctor; 'the money has been found.'

'Now, Father Brady,' said Mr. Phelan, 'come with me into Doolan's cell. He may have something to tell us;' and Mark and the doctor were left together.

'Both Minnie and your mother sent their best love,' said the doctor, in answer to Mark's eager inquiries. 'Your mother, poor soul, is very low. It is a grievous trial to her. I pray that the might of the Invisible may sustain and strengthen her. I would remain with you altogether, but I fear to leave them comfortless at home. I have arranged, however, to be with you every other day. I called on Sir Arthur O'Neill on my way here

this morning. He is greatly concerned for you ; and promised to communicate the intelligence at once to Tom.—If necessary, he will send a special messenger to hurry the party home. And now, Mark, my son,' added the doctor, in conclusion, 'be of good courage. The Wise Disposer will bring good out of even this evil. Do not forget his promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."'

Mark bowed his head as the doctor pronounced the words, and when he raised his eyes again he found himself alone.

CHAPTER XLV.


THE TRIAL.

AT length the Assizes commenced. The Grand Jury found 'True Bills against Mark Butler and Lawrence Doolan.' The morning the trial began the Court-house was densely crowded. From an early hour an eager multitude besieged the doors; and no sooner were they opened than the people poured in, and in a few minutes every available spot was occupied. The police present were powerless to restrain the rushing, surging crowd, and it was only when the place had been filled to its utmost capacity, and no more could gain admission, that anything like order was restored. Some of those present were interested in the fate of the prisoners; others were attracted by mere curiosity; but all were anxious to witness the great forensic

contest between two such celebrated lawyers as the attorney-general and Mr. Hutt.

Space had been reserved by the sheriff for the landlords and country gentlemen, who mustered strongly. They were eager to listen to the trial, and learn the fate of men who were accused of assassinating so prominent a member of their order as Sir Bernard Carew. The favourable rumours that had gone abroad respecting Mark Butler's previous character and life, increased the public interest in his trial. It was remarked, to his advantage, that he was a Protestant; and although he was only a farmer, that he was of gentle blood, and had received the education of a gentleman. It became known, too, that the O'Neill family warmly espoused Mark's cause, and that Sir Arthur had even visited him in prison. As for poor Larry Doolan, he was only a minor actor in the drama, and was altogether overlooked or forgotten.

Before the proceedings commenced, the audience amused itself by criticizing the



appearance and the abilities of the lawyers as they took their places; and quite a murmur of curiosity ran through the crowd as Mr. Hutt, accompanied by Mr. Phelan, entered the court, and took his seat within the bar. Father Brady and Doctor Young occupied places immediately behind him, where they could conveniently communicate either with him or with Mr. Phelan. There were also present half-a-dozen gentlemen from Ossory, who were prepared to give the strongest evidence of Mark Butler's honourable character and blameless, upright life. They had not required to be summoned for the occasion, but had willingly volunteered their services.

Precisely at ten o'clock the crier made proclamation for silence, and the judge, preceded by the high-sheriff, appeared on the bench. He was followed by Sir Arthur O'Neill, who, as lord-lieutenant of the county, occupied a seat beside him.

After the usual preliminaries, the judge ordered the prisoners to be put forward, and

immediately afterwards Mark and Doolan entered the dock.

Emerging suddenly from the dark passage where they had been so long awaiting the arrival of the judge, Mark's eyes were quite dazzled by the light in the court. He looked around on the sea of faces with a bewildered air, and felt so confused, that he thought he should have fallen if he had not laid hold of the iron bar in front of the dock for support. His head swam; the sight left his eyes; and a confused murmur of voices sounded in his ears. In a few moments, however, he recovered his self-possession, and bowed respectfully to the bench; and the judge was somewhat surprised to see Sir Arthur O'Neill look encouragingly at the prisoner, and bow familiarly to him in return.

'I see, you know one of the prisoners?' observed the judge to Sir Arthur, while the indictment was being read.

'Yes, my lord,' replied Sir Arthur. 'His brother is a distinguished Trinity College-man,

and a most intimate friend of my younger son's. They are travelling together, with some other members of my family, in Italy at present—or rather, I hope they are on their way home, for I am expecting them every day. It will be a great shock to Mr. Butler to hear that his brother has been accused of murder.'

'Oh, indeed!' rejoined the judge, as he looked at Mark with greater interest than he had yet displayed. 'A brother in Trinity, has he? Butler! To be sure! Now I remember all about him; a very promising young man he is. My son tells me that this Mr. Butler, to whom you refer, is the best speaker in the College Historical Society.'

'The same,' said Sir Arthur. 'We all like him very much; and on his account I pity the prisoner before you, and feel a deep interest in the present extraordinary case.'

'He certainly does not look like a criminal,' remarked the judge. 'Does he?'

'No,' replied Sir Arthur. 'A man with such an honest, frank, open face as that never

committed murder, or I am much mistaken. If he be guilty, the face is no index of the mind.'

'Ah, well, Sir Arthur,' said the judge, with a nod and a smile, 'you must not try to prejudice the court in his favour. We shall now hear what Mr. Attorney has to say on the subject.'

The swearing-in of the jury occupied some time, as Mark's counsel exercised his privilege extensively, and peremptorily challenged a number of names on the panel. At length the jury was sworn and the prisoners formally committed to their charge. As Mark's eye became familiar with the crowd he was able to recognize his friends, and received cordial looks of greeting from them all. He saw that his solicitor and counsel, as they bent their heads towards each other, smiled encouragingly at him. Father Brady's jovial face was beaming with sympathy as he nodded incessantly to Mark; but what touched the latter most of all was, when he saw that Dr. Young had covered

his eyes with his hand, but by the motion of the quivering lips, Mark saw that the good doctor had already taken his case to the Supreme Court, and was pleading earnestly for him before the Great Judge.

Around the crowded court Mark looked for one face—but in vain. His brother Tom was nowhere to be seen. His ear thirsted to hear the sound of Tom's voice. He longed, with a feverish longing, to feel the clasp of Tom's warm, strong hand. Up to the moment of his stepping into the dock, he had hoped against hope that Tom would be with him. He had prayed night and day, with passionate fervour, that Tom might return before his trial began—that he might have Tom's arm to lean upon—Tom's countenance and sympathy to support him in his great sorrow; but his hopes had been disappointed; his prayers had not been answered; and it was with a feeling of despair he moaned to himself, while his indictment was being read, 'Oh, Tom, my dear brother, why have you not returned? Why are you

not here with me? Why have you left me alone in this dark and bitter hour?’

At that moment he was startled by the clerk of the crown asking, in a loud voice,—

‘How say you, prisoners at the bar, Guilty, or Not Guilty?’

‘Not Guilty,’ answered Mark, in a clear, firm voice.

‘Thru for you, then!’ said Larry Doolan, who, in his anxiety to exonerate his master from the charge, forgot to answer for himself; ‘you’re not guilty, Misther Mark! No more guilty than their honours on the bench there! Not a more!’

Notwithstanding the gravity of the occasion, a general laugh went round the court at Larry’s expense. ‘Silence!’ exclaimed the crier.

‘Listen to me!’ said the crown official, looking fixedly at Larry. ‘And answer me!’

‘Oh yis, yer honour! I’m listenin!’ I’ll answer yer worship. I’m all attention, sir!’ said Larry, leaning forward over the edge of the dock, with an anxious expression of face

that excited another laugh; especially amongst the barristers and the jurors.

‘You must plead in the regular form,’ said the crown clerk. ‘Are you Guilty, or Not Guilty?’

‘Is it me? Arrah, why do you ax me such a question? Shure you know I am not,’ replied the incorrigible Larry, amid shouts of laughter from every part of the court.

‘Silence! Silence!’ shouted the crier, repeatedly—but in vain! The explosions of mirth continued for some time. Here Mark whispered to his servant, but the latter answered aloud with an injured air, ‘Yis, sir, shure I’m tellin ’em, Misther Mark, but they won’t let me, yer honour.’

When the laughter, in which the judge and Sir Arthur O’Neill heartily joined, had a little subsided, the clerk of the crown who felt that his dignity was compromised by these ludicrous proceedings, and who was angry accordingly, cried out sternly—‘Prisoner at the bar! Again I ask you, are you Guilty, or Not Guilty?’

‘No more than the masther himself here, I tell you again,’ said Larry, indignantly, as he pointed with his thumb to Mark; ‘I hope that’ll satisfy you.’

At this last *naïve* reply, the peals of laughter were again and again renewed, and so loud and general was the merriment, that the court officials were either unable or unwilling to repress it. Even the crier, as he tried to bawl ‘Silence!’ broke down himself and ended in a titter; while the judge threw himself back in his seat, and gave a hearty roar.

‘Simply say you are not guilty,’ said Mark, addressing himself to Doolan.

‘Shure I have, sir!’ said Larry. ‘I’ve tould em half-a-dozen times, I’m not, and they wont believe me. I am no more guilty of the murther than the child unborn; or yourself, Misther Mark, and shure everyone knows you had nothing to do with it,’ Larry added with an air of triumph.

‘I don’t think you need ask the prisoner any more questions,’ observed the judge. ‘Let his

in it gave the worst possible construction. That letter, he declared, could have been written only for one or other of two purposes—either to intimidate and alarm the person to whom it was addressed, or to ward off suspicion from the writer, in case his meditated crime should be discovered.

Having dwelt at length upon the heinousness of the crime, the insecurity of property and life, and the lawless spirit these agrarian murders indicated, he proceeded to dilate with marvellous ingenuity of detail upon all the circumstances which seemed to prove the guilt of the accused; and concluded thus,—‘Gentlemen of the Jury, in addition to all this, it will be my painful duty to prove to you that only a short week before he was assassinated the prisoner Doolan sent a threatening letter to the deceased baronet, ordering him to prepare his coffin; that, on the fatal morning both the prisoners were seen close to the place where the brutal deed was committed; that an article belonging to one

of them, which will be produced before you, was found beside the murdered man ; that the prisoner Butler was seen to leave the field where the body of Sir Bernard Carew was found half-an-hour afterwards. I shall produce the owner of the shebeen, or public-house on the road-side, who will swear that shortly after the murder was committed, both prisoners called at his house ; that Doolan was covered with blood ; that his face was bleeding profusely—no doubt from injuries received in the struggle with the deceased. Every other fact which I have stated to you will be substantiated upon oath. I shall be able to prove to you that Doolan boasted openly at the chapel-gate of Ossory, that he had taken part in this atrocious crime ; and that instead of being ashamed of it, he gloried in the fact ; and although my learned friend on the other side may try to dispute the competency of the witness, I think you will have little, if any, doubt of the truth of the statement. Although the evidence which I

shall adduce is entirely circumstantial, it is so clear, so convincing, and so complete, as to amount to a demonstration. It will be for the prisoner's able counsel — and they are fortunate in being defended by the greatest advocate at the bar — to explain the facts which I have stated. You must not allow the excellent character borne by one of the prisoners, to outweigh sworn evidence. If I do not convince you beyond all reasonable doubt of the prisoners' guilt, you will, of course, give them the benefit of that doubt, and if, after having heard the evidence, you can consistently with that evidence and with your solemn oaths, find the prisoners innocent of the charge preferred against them, no one will more heartily rejoice at your verdict of acquittal than myself.'

Although the sympathies of the great majority present were with the prisoners, yet the learned gentleman's speech was so moderate and impartial; so free from everything like exaggeration or vindictive feeling towards the

accused; he seemed so anxious only to vindicate the law, and elicit the truth, that when he sat down there was a loud murmur of applause.

The examination of the witnesses then commenced. All the persons who had been examined at the inquest now repeated the testimony they gave on that occasion, with little or no variation.

Witness after witness came upon the table, and deposed to all the facts that the attorney-general had stated. One of the most important of these was the late baronet's servant,—

William Watson, who again deposed to having seen two men on horseback under a tree immediately after the deceased had left him on the road. Identifies the prisoners as the men he saw on that occasion. Is quite positive that he is not mistaken. A severe cross-examination failed to shake Watson's testimony in the least.

Mortimer Sullivan was next examined. He

remembers the day of Sir Bernard Carew's murder. He was caught in the thunder-storm, and took refuge under a hedge a couple of fields off from where the body was found. While he was lying under the hedge, a man jumped over quite close to him : the man was dressed like a gentleman ; he was muttering to himself, and hurried away across the field. Identifies one of the prisoners (Butler) as the man. Is quite sure that he is the man. In his cross-examination, this witness admitted, that he had not spoken to any one at the time of what he had seen. Was afraid to do so, lest he might get himself into trouble. Was not an informer. He expected no reward for his evidence on this occasion. On his solemn oath he did not. Heard there was a reward offered, but did not expect any. Would not disgrace himself, poor as he was, by receiving a farthing of it.

Lowry Sheehy, on being sworn and examined, proved that he kept a public-house, or shebeen. Was licensed to sell beer only.

Would not swear that he did not sell whisky also; some people called it potheen. Would rather not answer any more questions on that subject. Remembers the date of the murder. Mr. L'Estrange's gamekeepers came in that day to escape from the storm, thinks they may have had a glass of something; is not quite sure—perhaps they had. Mr. L'Estrange himself found his men there, was angry with them, and sent them away. After Mr. L'Estrange left, two strange men rode up to the door, they dismounted and came into the house. One of the men was cut about the nose, forehead, and side of the head; the man said his horse had thrown him. One of his hands also was badly cut; his clothes were not dirty: said he had fallen on a heap of broken stones on the road side; his buff waistcoat was covered with blood; witness gave him water to wash his face, and some whisky to put on his wounds. Thinks the prisoners are the men; does not like to swear positively. On being closely pressed, the witness, who gave his evidence

most unwillingly, said he would not swear that they were not the men. They are very like them; believes they are the men; will not swear positively:—

‘My lord,’ cried Mark, in a clear voice, ‘the man is quite right. We did call at his house on the day in question. The facts are as he has just stated.’ (Sensation in court.)

Examination resumed: He had not told any one that the prisoners had been at his house. He admitted it for the first time when Serjeant Cooper called some time ago to inquire. Knew, of course, of the murder, and had heard of the reward. Had not volunteered his evidence at the inquest. Was present; but did not like to speak, lest he should be called an informer. This witness was not cross-examined.

Serjeant Cooper was next called to the witness-box. He repeated, with great minuteness and accuracy, the evidence he gave at the inquest. In answer to a question from the attorney-general, he said that he had found a penknife in the clay beside the murdered man.

The penknife now produced, with a mother-of-pearl handle, four steel blades, a corkscrew at one end, and a silver fruit-blade at the other, with the name 'Mark Butler' engraved on the handle, is the same. That is the knife he found.

Mr. Hutt objected. There was no evidence whatever to prove that the knife had ever belonged to his client.

'The knife is mine,' said Mark, who knew it instantly, and started when he saw it in the policeman's hands; 'though how it came there I cannot tell. I lent it—'

'If you say a word more, sir,' said Mr. Hutt angrily to Mark, 'I will throw up my brief and let you conduct your own case.'

'Prisoner,' remarked the judge, who was prepossessed in Mark's favour by his open admissions, 'you had better be silent, and leave your defence in your counsel's hands.'

'Very well, my lord,' Mark quietly answered. 'But the knife is mine. I thought it was no harm to admit the truth.'

Examination resumed: He had marked the knife, and given it into the possession of the resident magistrate, in whose custody it had been ever since. The name engraved on the handle had given him the first clue to the perpetrators of the murder. Had been for months making inquiries about the prisoners, and in getting up the evidence in the present case. Had found a letter from the prisoner Butler in the pocket-book of the deceased, warning him that his life was in danger. Will positively swear that the letter is in the prisoner's handwriting. Had seen him write several times, and has no doubt at all about it. The letter produced is the same. He also found amongst the late baronet's papers a threatening letter, with the Ossory postmark on the envelope. It was dated the 16th August, or seven days before Sir Bernard Carew was murdered. The letter produced is the same. It contained a rude drawing of a coffin, and ordered the deceased to prepare one without delay, as the writer gave him fair

notice he meant to take his life on the first opportunity, in revenge for his cruel treatment of his tenants. The letter was signed 'Captain Freeney,' and was written on thin-ruled paper, which witness thought was of foreign manufacture. Believes that the prisoner Doolan was the writer. In fact, is quite sure of it, because the day he was arrested, the witness searched his room in the residence of the prisoner Butler, and in an old handbox he found three letters addressed to Doolan from the United States. From one of these letters which he now produces, half a sheet of blank paper had been torn off, leaving one corner behind it. On comparing the threatening notice sent to the deceased, with the letter found in the prisoner's box, they corresponded in every particular. He now handed both sheets up to the jury, and they could judge for themselves. This witness was subjected to a severe and searching cross-examination by prisoner's counsel, but his evidence remained unshaken on all the material points. He ad-

mitted that he knew of the large reward offered in this case by the government and the county, and believed that he would receive some of it. He had been transferred from the one county to the other at his own request, in order that he might have greater opportunities for investigating this case.

William Bray was next sworn, but Mr. Hutt rose and objected to his evidence being received, as the witness was a person of unsound mind. He was what the peasantry call a half-natural—in other words, an idiot.

The judge decided to receive the evidence, making a note of the learned counsel's objection.

This witness swore that he was coming out of the chapel at Ossory one Sunday last winter—cannot remember the particular day—and heard a number of men, about half-a-dozen, speaking of the late Sir Bernard Carew. The prisoner Doolan was one of them. He told the others, laughingly, 'that he had warned Carew he would have his life, and that he had kept

his word.' 'Who helped you at the job, Larry?' asked one of the men. 'Some one that you all know,' Doolan answered, with a wink. 'Between us we settled him; and a tough job it was.' Witness heard no more. Did not know who the other men were. This witness was not cross-examined.

No one attached much importance to the evidence of the last witness. It seemed too absurd. But Cooper's examination and cross-examination were listened to with breathless interest by the crowded court. Mark's candid, but incautious admissions, that himself and Doolan were at the shebeen, and that the pen-knife was his, caused a feeling of admiration for his courage and truthfulness, but at the same time they deepened the impression of his guilt. When Serjeant Cooper produced the two pieces of Larry Doolan's torn letter, and placed them together, the attorney-general looked up significantly at the jury, and many of the spectators despairingly shook their heads. Several other witnesses were then examined to

prove some formal matters of detail, and when the counsel for the Crown rose and said that the case for the prosecution was closed, Dr. Young buried his face in his hands, and Mark Butler gave himself up for lost.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE VERDICT.

PROFOUND silence reigned in the crowded court as Mr. Hutt rose to address the jury on behalf of the prisoners. All eyes were fixed upon him. Every head was bent forward in eager curiosity to hear every syllable of the opening sentences of his speech. It was felt by all present that he had a difficult, if not a hopeless task before him, and the desire to know what line of defence he would adopt became extreme.

‘This case will place Hutt on his metal,’ observed an old grey-haired barrister to Father Brady; ‘the evidence against the prisoners is overwhelming and complete at every point—not a link wanting.’

‘Do you think they will be convicted?’ inquired the despairing priest.

‘Sure to be,’ answered the lawyer with the

greatest unconcern. 'They have not the ghost of a chance.'

Pausing for a moment to arrange his papers, and look around on the silent, expectant crowd, the jury, and the judge, Mr. Hutt began: 'My lord, and gentlemen of the jury,'—he had scarcely uttered the words, when a loud altercation at the entrance to the court attracted the attention of the audience, and cries of 'Make way there, make way there!' made the speaker pause, as three or four persons struggled through the passage leading to the dock, and in a few moments Tom Butler appeared, dusty and travel-stained, closely followed by Helen O'Neill leaning on her cousin's arm, while Godfrey L'Estrange brought up the rear.

'Make way there! Stand aside, gentlemen!' cried the police-officer who was acquainted with the new arrivals, and was anxious to prove his zeal and make friends of the powers that be. It was but the work of a moment for Tom to spring on the witness table, and leaning over the dock clasp the affrighted Mark in his

arms, while the latter, pale as death, uttered a low cry, 'Oh, Tom, Tom!' and fell forward heavily on his brother's breast.

'Give me some water,' said Tom, to the alarmed turnkey, 'quick! quick!' but there was no water in the dock, and at the instant the crier handed Tom a glass of water from the bench. He dashed the water in Mark's face, untied his cravat, slapped his hands, and in a few minutes he revived and looked around him.

While Tom was engaged in restoring Mark to consciousness, a barrister had politely risen and given his seat to Miss O'Neill. Her cousin and L'Estrange remained standing. No sooner had Sir Arthur O'Neill seen Tom on the witness table, and Helen and his son behind him, than he arose in great agitation from his seat, and whispered to the judge, 'This is the prisoner's brother; I see that my son and niece have just come with him.'

The spectators, too, ignorant of the relationship between the brothers sprang to their feet,

and looked on with anxious sympathy while Tom leant over the dock, cradling the hands, and wiping the brows of the unconscious Mark, and as no one knew what consequences this interruption might lead to, the wildest confusion prevailed in court. Nor was the interest lessened, but increased, when it became whispered about that Mark's brother had just arrived, accompanied by Miss O'Neill and her cousin.

Mr. Hutt, who was still on his legs, was informed by Father Brady in a few hurried sentences who Tom was, and remained standing, waiting for quiet to be restored before he resumed his speech, being quite unaware of the strange turn that Tom's arrival would give to the case. Here the attorney-general rose and demanded to know what this strange and unseemly interruption meant.

Tom not heeding the question, turned round from the dock and stood directly facing the jury and the judge, and addressing the latter, said,—

‘My lord, my name is Butler. I am brother to one of the prisoners at the bar. I do not know exactly what has taken place in this court to-day, as I have only this moment arrived. The scene before me, however, sufficiently tells its own tale. My lord, I have now respectfully to request that these men (pointing to Mark and Doolan) be discharged from custody, and that I may be allowed to take their place in the dock. They are both innocent of the crime charged against them. The guilty man stands now before you. Sir Bernard Carew met his death at my hands.’


When Tom commenced to speak his voice was full and clear, but before he had finished it sank almost to a whisper, proving what a painful effort the confession cost him. But low as was the tone in which the last words were pronounced, they were distinctly heard by every person in court, so deep was the silence, and so great the anxiety to hear him. Tom’s statement electrified his audience: and coming so soon after evidence which seemed so full and

complete against the prisoners, its effect was increased a thousandfold.

The judge and Sir Arthur O'Neill exchanged glances of surprise. The attorney-general sharply scrutinized Tom's face. Mr. Hutt in his utter perplexity turned to Phelan for an explanation, but the astonished solicitor had no explanation to give. Doctor Young and Father Brady gazed at each other with horror in their faces, but upon no one did Tom's few sentences produce such an overwhelming impression as on Mark himself.

His joy on seeing Tom unexpectedly appear at the very moment that hope had abandoned him was so great, as to cause a revulsion of feeling that completely overcame him, and for a few minutes rendered him insensible. But now when he saw the danger that he had feared transferred from himself to Tom, it seemed more fearful to him than ever. It was death coming to him in a more appalling form.

Grasping the edge of the dock with both



hands, Mark leaned forward, and listened with parted lips and glaring eyes, while Tom accused himself of the murder; and as the last words fell upon his ear, the cold perspiration burst from every pore. Instantly the thought struck him that Tom, knowing his danger, had falsely accused himself in order to save him from impending death, for he cried aloud,—

‘Tom, my dear brother, are you insane? Recall what you have just said! You know nothing of the crime they charge against me!’


Tom made no reply, but hung down his head. He seemed afraid to look at Mark.

‘My lord,’ continued Mark, earnestly, addressing the judge, ‘you must not mind what my brother says. He accuses himself to save me. I will plead guilty, my lord, rather than that he should be involved in the matter. My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I am guilty.’

‘My lord,’ said Tom, solemnly, ‘again I assert and can prove that both the prisoners are innocent. I alone am guilty of the death of Sir Bernard Carew.’

The excitement in the court was now indescribable. The contradictory assertions of the two brothers, and the efforts of each to exonerate the other by criminating himself excited the most painful interest. Tom's positive statement was followed by silence, which was broken by Larry Doolan, exclaiming,—

‘Arrah! do ye hear this! Tare-an-ages, but they’ll drive me mad between ’em! That’s what they’ll do! Both of ’em confessin’ to a thing they know no more of than the man in the moon! Shure if anyone at all had a hand in it, it was meself. They are both as innocent as lambs! Shure, gintlemen of the jury, and you, my lord, it stands to raison they are! For whin Sir Bernard Carew put the masther here out of The Grove, and I proposed to pepper him about the ears with a few slugs, he was going to kill me entirely. Didn’t he threaten the Peelers on me! Faith, he did so! Peggy Dunne herself could tell ye that if she was to the fore! And now, do ye hear this?—that they are both guilty! guilty inagh!’



Here the attorney-general rose again, and requested the jury not to forget this last confession of the prisoner Doolan.

‘Do I understand you,’ said the judge—upon whom a new light was beginning to break—addressing Tom, ‘to persist in accusing yourself of the murder with which the prisoners at the bar are charged? Remember, if so, that whatever you may say, will be used against you. I warn you, therefore, to be cautious.’

‘I accuse myself, my lord,’ answered Tom, ‘of the death of Sir Bernard Carew. I alone was concerned in it. No matter what either of the prisoners may say, or how strong appearances may be against them, they are both innocent. If your lordship will kindly hear me for a few moments, I will explain all the circumstances as they occurred.’


The judge nodded, and Tom continued amid the most death-like silence in the court.

‘My lord, a gentleman is sitting beside you whose guest I had the honour to be when this melancholy event took place. It was on the

morning of the twenty-third of August last that, in company with Mr. Robert O'Neill, the son of my host, I went down the river Shannon in an open boat.

‘I parted from Mr. O'Neill near the ferry on the river. He went farther down to look for game on the moors; I strolled across the fields to inspect the ruins of a church in the locality. About midway between the ruins and the river, I met the late Sir Bernard Carew. It seems I was on his lands, although at the time I was not aware of the fact.

‘The moment he saw me he flew into a furious passion, and with oaths and insulting epithets he ordered me to leave. I apologized for my unintentional trespass, and calmly remonstrated with him for having used such violent language. He repeated it with aggravations. I was stung by his insults, and demanded an apology. His answer was a blow. I rushed on him, and a fearful struggle took place between us. I was so maddened by his insults and his blow, that I only remember



now I succeeded in throwing him to the ground; in falling his head came with great force against the jagged edges of a large stone. Seeing him on the ground insensible, I was trying to raise him, when a gentleman, a friend of mine, suddenly crossed the hedge from the next field and stood beside me. I told him what I had done. We remained some time by the prostrate form, but finding that life was extinct, my friend counselled me to fly. I was frenzied by seeing the fatal result of the struggle. I was rendered desperate by the fear of the consequences of my rash act, and in a weak and foolish moment I complied with the advice.

‘Late that evening I reached Ballyluce Castle. The next day I returned to my brother’s house and fell dangerously ill. Remorse for what I had done preyed upon me, and my life was despaired of. I was ordered by my medical advisers to a milder climate, and have been all these months absent from Ireland. I knew nothing of what occurred

here during the last month, or the prisoners should not have been in the dock. I did not even hear of their arrest until to-day.

About four weeks ago I left Naples, accompanied by some friends, who are now present. We visited Sicily, and as the weather was fine we came home by sea. We only arrived this morning in my friend's yacht at Kingstown. Taking up the morning paper, the first thing that caught my eye was that the grand jury had found true bills against the prisoners. We had barely time to catch the down mail train, and arrived here a few minutes since.

'This, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury, is the truth respecting the death of Sir Bernard Carew. I shall not dwell on the anguish of mind and pain of body that I have endured. I shall say nothing of the remorse that has given me no rest day or night. I have told you truly and simply the facts as they occurred. I had no expectation of meeting the deceased baronet the morning the fatal struggle took place. I bore him no malice.

The quarrel was not of my seeking, and no one could be more shocked and grieved at its fatal termination than myself.

‘I do not want to excuse myself. In conclusion, I have merely to express my deep regret that I lacked the moral courage at the time to confess my fault—or, if you will, my crime. Had I done so, those who are now wrongfully accused would have been spared much unmerited suffering. As the only reparation I can offer, I ask, my lord, that they be discharged, and I willingly surrender, to accept whatever punishment your lordship, in the execution of the law, may think fit to inflict upon me for the rash act of which I alone am guilty.’


He ceased. There was no halting or hesitation in his speech this time. As he stood on the witness stand, and drew himself up to his full height, no one could gaze upon the honest, open face, look into the grand, truthful eyes, or listen to the full mellow voice of the speaker as he told his story, and

for a moment doubt its truth. It carried conviction to the minds of all present—to all save one. When Tom had concluded, the judge said,—

‘Well, Mr. Attorney, in the face of these important disclosures, what course do you propose to take now?’

‘To let the case against the prisoners proceed, my lord,’ was the immediate answer. ‘If, my lord,’ the attorney-general added, ‘the statement to which we have just listened has been concocted by the witness to save the prisoners, it does credit to his ingenuity, but it will hardly serve his purpose. If it were believed, that story would rescue the prisoners from a conviction for murder and only subject its author to a trial for manslaughter—although it is very doubtful if any jury would convict for even the lesser offence under the circumstances stated.’

‘Besides, my lord, it leaves untouched in the most material points the mass of evidence for the prosecution. My lord, and gentlemen



of the jury, you have the simple statement—for he was not even sworn—the simple assertion of this deeply-interested person, against the most convincing evidence that was ever adduced in a court of justice; and against the admissions, too, of the prisoners themselves, one of whom has just pleaded guilty, and the other admitted that he had proposed to shoot the murdered man.

‘If the last witness really felt all the remorse of which he speaks, for the act which he alleges he committed, it is singular that he never gave any indication of it until to-day when he found his brother in danger of a capital conviction. It is rather unfortunate too, for the credit of the witness, that the friend who so opportunely arrived on the scene of the murder, and advised him so sensibly to fly, is not here to corroborate his statement.’

‘He is here,’ interrupted a loud voice close to the speaker, and the next moment Godfrey L’Estrange mounted the witness table. L’Estrange, who was well known to nearly

everyone present, was then sworn, and examined by Mr. Hutt. He said he had heard the statement of the last witness—Butler. Believes it to be true in every particular. Remembers the twenty-third of August last. Was out shooting that day. A great thunder-storm came on. He walked across a field of turnips, and was about to climb a high hedge when he heard voices in angry altercation in the next field. Was some time in climbing the hedge, which was a high ditch planted with blackthorn on the top. On gaining the top of the fence he saw two men close by struggling together, and one of them fell. Was so startled that he either forgot to cry out, or was unable to do so. Jumped down into the field, and found one of the men leaning over the other, and beseeching him to get up. The prostrate man was Sir Bernard Carew; the other man leaning over him was the last witness, Butler.


He, witness, was frightened, for on examining him he found that Sir Bernard was dead.

After falling he never moved or spoke. Butler had said to witness, 'Good heavens! I believe I have killed him.' Witness asked Butler how the quarrel began, and he told him substantially what he had just told the court. He had advised Butler to escape, but at first he refused to do so. Soon afterwards he left the spot, and went in one direction, while witness went in another. Was present at the inquest, but was not examined. Knew that the verdict of 'Wilful Murder' brought in by the jury at the inquest was a mistaken one.

Cross-examined by the attorney-general: He said that when he gained the top of the ditch there were only two men in the field—Butler and Carew. Had there been anyone else he must have seen them. Butler had no weapons; neither had the deceased, with the exception of a riding-whip. It was a hand-to-hand struggle. When witness first caught sight of them, they were swaying backwards and forwards, and then deceased fell. Butler told him that deceased had struck him first.

His ear was bleeding ; his neck also was cut. Had advised Butler to escape, because he thought it was the best thing he could have done. Thinks so still. He went back to look for his keepers in order to send them forward to find the body. Had done that to screen Butler. Was at the inquest, but did not tell anything of what he had seen, for the very good reason that he had not been asked. Was a friend of Butler's. Had only arrived from Italy that morning. Butler came with him in his (witness's) yacht. Swore positively that neither of the prisoners in the dock had, or could have had, anything to do with the death of the deceased. The last witness had accidentally killed him. Had spoken of what he saw the day of Carew's death to only one person. That person was now present—Mr. Robert O'Neill.

Robert O'Neill having been sworn, was next examined by Mr. Hutt. He confirmed the evidence of the two preceding witnesses, and deposed to the finding of Butler's ring near the



spot where the deceased met his death. The ring made him suspect that Butler had killed him. He asked him that night, and Butler told him exactly the same story as the jury had heard from him that day. The last witness, L'Estrange, also told him what they had just heard. The witness, Butler, was on a visit at his father's at the time.

Here the attorney-general rose and said that, after the evidence to which they had just listened, he would not proceed further with the charge against the prisoners.

The judge then, in a few sentences, charged the jury, who immediately brought in a verdict of 'Not Guilty,' which was received with thunders of applause that all the efforts of the court crier could not silence.

As Mark left the dock he was surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd, who shook him by the hand and wished him joy upon his fortunate escape. Mr. Hutt added his congratulations. 'I don't remember,' said that gentleman to Mark, 'a more extraordinary case than yours.

Everything was against us. The opportune arrival of your brother has certainly saved you from a conviction. When I rose to speak, I had nothing to trust in but evidence to character, and that, with the jury before whom you were arraigned, would have been a poor reliance. Who could have anticipated such a deliverance?' Forcing his way through the crowd, Sir Arthur O'Neill now joined the group. He shook hands with Mark, and expressed the warmest sympathy with him. 'Ah, Butler, my good friend,' said the baronet, addressing Tom, 'glad to see you home again, and looking so well too. Egad, you arrived just in time! What an extraordinary story you have just told us! Eh, Bob, you rascal! Is this you? Knew all this, and never told your old father a word of it! Helen, my darling, have you come back at last? I suppose, Nell, you were in the conspiracy with the rest of them! How do you do, L'Estrange? How do you do? Another conspirator! Mr. Hutt,

will you tell me what I should do to all these refractory young people?’

Sir Arthur O'Neill was so delighted at Mark's acquittal, so confounded at the confession Tom had just made in court, and the knowledge L'Estrange and his son possessed of the transaction, and at the same time so pleased at the arrival of Helen and her friends, that he scarcely knew what he was saying or doing, as, in his intense satisfaction, he uttered a series of exclamations. ‘Come along with me, my friends,’ he said, in conclusion, ‘you shall all go home with me to dinner. I have ordered the carriages, and here they are waiting for us.’


‘You must excuse me, Sir Arthur,’ said Doctor Young, who seemed yet stupified by the scene he had just witnessed in court, and whose agitation was so extreme that he was unable to arrange the confused ideas that filled his head about Mark's innocence and Tom's guilt. ‘I must go home at once. There are anxious, weary hearts waiting for me, to whom

this matter is a question of life and death. It would be cruelty to keep them an hour longer in suspense than I can help, especially when I have good news to communicate.'

'And I know, Sir Arthur, you will excuse me,' pleaded Mark; who, after what seemed to him such a long absence from home, was naturally anxious to relieve by his presence Minnie's anxieties and his mother's fears. 'I also must go home to-night.'

'My dear doctor,' cried Father Brady, who was by no means unwilling to enjoy Sir Arthur's renowned hospitality after his long day's fast, 'you cannot go home to-night without me. Mr. Phelan here must return. He will call at The Beeches and tell the good news to Mrs. Butler and Miss Young. So make your mind easy on their account. We can all go home together in the morning; and a good dinner,' added Father Mat, in an under-tone to Mark, 'will do none of us any harm this evening.'

'Certainly,' rejoined the attorney, 'I shall be only too happy to call at The Beeches and



inform Mrs. Butler of our victory. I fancy, however, the tidings have already gone before me.'

'If that be not the case, my good sir,' said the doctor to Mr. Phelan, 'pray be cautious, and break the matter to them gently. Since the day of Mark's arrest, they have had an anxious and troubled time of it. Sudden news, even when good, has often been fatal in its effects.'

The attorney promised to be careful in the performance of his mission and departed. The whole party were soon on their way to Ballyluce Castle; and while the guests were enjoying themselves in the dining-room, Larry Doolan became the hero of the servants' hall.

The news of Mark's acquittal, and the full account of the way in which Sir Bernard Carew had met his death, were circulated in Ossory that night and the next morning not only by Mr. Phelan, but by the gentlemen who had gone to the assizes to give evidence in favour of Mark's character. The next evening, as Mark and

Tom, Doctor Young and Father Brady, were coming home, they found an immense crowd assembled on the road to meet them. Green boughs were torn from the trees and strewn on the ground. The people took the horse from the outside car, a dozen stalwart fellows yoked themselves to the shafts, and with Larry Doolan on the driver's seat, acting as master of the ceremonies, they dragged the four travellers home in triumph to The Beeches.


A fiddler had been engaged for the occasion, dancing began on the lawn ; and, as night came on, bonfires blazed on all the surrounding hills. Candour compels us to admit, that if Mark Butler and Doolan had really murdered Carew, their reception would not have been one whit less enthusiastic, so great is the antipathy of the Irish peasantry to the Saxon laws. A significant fact on which our law makers might ponder with advantage.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.


ONCE more Tom Butler is a welcome guest at Ballyluce Castle. Sir Arthur O'Neill is more cordial in his manner to him than ever, and already treats him as a member of the family. Lady O'Neill has ceased her useless opposition, and graciously resigned herself to the inevitable. Miss Dillon greets him daily with her brightest smiles, and is quite happy at the thought of spending the rest of her life beneath Tom's roof. O'Neill looks upon Tom as a brother; as for Helen, the difficulties and dangers that threatened to separate her from Tom have bound her more closely to him than ever.

The clouds that had blackened the whole of Tom's horizon have rolled away, and his sky is now bright and clear. The gulf that had opened at his feet, and seemed to cut him off



from Helen, and life and hope, has closed again, and he is with her once more—loving and beloved. The gloomy presentiments that had disturbed him have all vanished like vapours before the sun. With reviving hope came returning health; and now, chastened and purified by the fiery ordeal through which he has passed, he feels a happiness the intensity of which language cannot express.

Again with Helen at his side, he enjoys the summer days at Ballyluce, the moonlight promenades on the terrace, and the boatings on the river. But it was Helen's chief delight to drive Tom daily over to the Abbey to witness the alterations and improvements that were being made in their future home. They had been all designed by Helen herself, and were now being completed under her superintendence. Chief amongst them was a library for Tom's books, and a cosy study at the end of it, with windows opening upon a flower garden that sloped down to the waters of an artificial lake.



‘Here,’ Helen said to him, ‘you can be alone when you wish it. And, if I be very good, I may be allowed to come in occasionally and talk to you. When you are tired reading, you can walk out into the garden, and inhale the perfume of the flowers. I was planning this garden the very morning Bob told me that dreadful story about you and Sir Bernard Carew.’

‘And what did you think when you heard it first?’ Tom inquired.

‘I did not know what to think. I was too much frightened and shocked to think,’ Helen replied. ‘I only wanted to come to you, to see you, to be with you. So, in spite of all Bob’s remonstrances, I ordered the carriage at once, and in ten minutes afterwards we were on the road to The Beeches. I had no idea at the time how ill you were. It was cruel of you to conceal it from me so long.’


‘And I was thinking how hard it was to give you up,’ Tom rejoined, ‘and wondering if I should ever see you again, when you drove

up to the door. I shall never forget the joy of the moment when you walked into the room, and when I felt your arms around my neck.'

'And pray what made you think of giving me up?' Helen asked. 'You talk of it so very easily.'

'My love, I thought that the unfortunate death of Carew had separated me from you for ever. I dared not think of you on that account,' Tom answered.

'How little men know of woman's heart!' Helen remarked. 'Why nothing that you could do now would ever separate me from you. When a girl loves truly, she loves so entirely and unreservedly that nothing can destroy the feeling. I think if it were possible for you to become a great criminal I should not love you less, but perhaps more. If all the world were to turn against you, I should cling the more closely to you. But here come Dr. Young and your brother. They are thinking, I suppose, of to-morrow.'



The next day Tom and Helen were married, and departed for a six-months' tour in Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land. We shall not weary the reader with a long account of the wedding. Tom and Helen both wished it to be as private as possible, but to this Lady O'Neill flatly and positively demurred, saying, that her niece should be married with all the form and state and ceremony, to which her family for long generations had been accustomed.

Why should we say anything here of the splendid wedding festivities? Why should we give long descriptions of the Castle filled with company—of the dresses of the bridesmaids, and the unequalled beauty of the bride—of the crowded church—the waving flags—the pealing bells—the triumphal arches—the speeches at the *déjeuné*, and the departure of the bride and bridegroom? Are they not all written, or rather printed, in the veracious columns of the 'County Chronicle?'

Mark Butler and Minnie Young were married

a short time before. The ceremony was performed by the doctor in the little chapel, which, in accordance with a recent Act of Parliament, had been registered for the solemnization of marriages for this occasion. Never had the chapel looked so gay. The earthen floor was covered with carpets. The pulpit and the quaint-fashioned reading-desk were decked with flowers. Festoons of flowers hung from the windows and the walls. Even the smoky old stove had its ugliness concealed by wreaths of evergreens and flowers. The decorations had been undertaken by the village girls, Protestant and Catholic, with whom both bride and bridegroom were universal favourites. Their efforts had been so successful, that when the doctor opened the little vestry door he lifted up his hands in wonder at the transformation that had been effected, while Minnie, as she entered leaning on Tom's arm, uttered a cry of pleasure and delight.

The good doctor's voice was tremulous with emotion as he performed the ceremony, and with

hands clasped above his head, fervently pronounced the benediction over the married pair. Tom was Mark's best man, and O'Neill gave the beautiful and blushing bride away. As the bridal party left the chapel, the village children strewed wild flowers in their path, and as they drove away the assembled spectators greeted them with three hearty cheers.

On returning to Middlemount, Mark saw a large, square paper-parcel, addressed to himself, on the breakfast table. On opening it he found a squat parchment, neatly folded and tied, which on examination proved to be title-deeds, conveying the fee simple of 'The Beeches' to Mark Butler, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, for ever. A tiny note inside, written in a delicate lady's hand on perfumed paper, informed the bewildered reader, that the enclosed title-deeds were a wedding present to Mark from his affectionate sister (soon to be), Helen.

Father Brady was present at the breakfast, and was the life and soul of the party. He complimented the bride, wished the bridegroom

joy ; took wine with every one present ; and in a speech, replete with wit and humour, proposed the toast of the ladies, which was eloquently responded to by O'Neill.

In the general joy that prevailed the poor were not forgotten. Father Brady had consented to act as almoner, and, by his judicious distribution of the doctor's bounty, the indigent members of the priest's flock were plentifully regaled. In the midst of tears and smiles of joy, with blessing and congratulations showered upon them from every side, the happy pair departed on their wedding tour. In the evening an immense bonfire of turf and tar-barrels blazed on the village green.

O'Neill easily got over the scruples that Butler had raised in his mind about the lawfulness of entering the Church for a living—comforting himself with the satisfactory assurance that in doing so he was not worse than his neighbours. Nor were his doubts increased when his father presented him with a fat living, where the clerical duties were of

the lightest possible description—so light, indeed, that they might be said to amount to no duties at all.

He soon after married. And married, too, his first love ; that fair English girl, with the blue eyes and the golden hair, whose faithless desertion—he declared to Butler at the commencement of this story—had driven him to drinking and despair. The sacrifice intended by Miss Seymour's cruel father had not been offered. The rich London banker, for whom she was destined, opportunely failed—owing to an unfortunate crisis in the money market—and the young lady remained single. No sooner had O'Neill become acquainted with this fact, which he learned from his cousin Helen, than he flew to his fair enslaver once more, and again besought her to fly from parental tyranny to his protecting arms and his pretty parsonage. This time the lady said 'Yes,' with the consent of her iron-hearted sire, and O'Neill carried home his beautiful young wife in triumph to the banks of the Shannon.

The reader will be glad to learn that he is quite reformed as to his drinking habits. He entirely eschews whisky, both Scotch and Irish, and is firm against the powerful seductions of potheen. He confines himself mostly to claret; or, if he ever tires of that beverage, he falls back on his old friend Bass, but never exceeds the moderate allowance to which he rigorously restricts himself, of six quart-bottles a day.


L'Estrange is yet a bachelor, and promises to die one. The Chancery suit, after years of tedious litigation, has at length been decided in his favour. The sudden death of his uncle gave him the possession of another fine estate. But these large accessions to his fortune, which have made him a wealthy man, have caused no change in his pursuits or views of life. The only point on which he recanted was his favourite theory that it was criminal to pay tradesmen; and all his debts have long since been paid in full. He is as free from ambition as ever, and holds to his old belief that man

was made not to aspire, but to enjoy. Influenced by Butler's advice, he attempted for a while the management of his estates, and tried to interest himself in high farming, cattle breeding, and the rotation of crops; but the effort was too much for him. He threw them all up successively in disgust, and betook himself with fresh zest to his dinners at his club, his hunters, and his yacht.

Nothing further was ever heard of Captain Flood.

In the conversation that took place between Morton and Stinson under the boat-shed, which had been overheard by Helen O'Neill in the summer-house, Morton expressed the opinion that Carew had lured the captain to the lime-kiln, and thrown him in. Only the latter part of the conjecture was correct. It will be remembered by the reader, that Sir Bernard Carew, having burned the documents he had found in Captain Flood's pocket-book, gently crept down the stairs, and as he passed across the hall saw through the open door that Flood

was asleep in the dining-room. As he left the house the captain awoke, and missed his pocket-book. He immediately suspected that Sir Bernard had seen it, and stolen it from him while he slept. Jumping up, he rushed to the window, and just at that moment through the twilight he saw the baronet hurrying along the avenue towards the lodge. Instantly the captain hastened after him, and screening himself from observation by walking under the trees, he kept Sir Bernard well in view. When the latter left the avenue and struck across the fields, the captain followed him cautiously, until he stood beside the lime-kiln: here Sir Bernard carefully drew out the handkerchief in which he had wrapped the paper of ashes and the cover of the pocket-book, and throwing them into the glowing kiln, exclaimed, 'Flood will scarcely find them there.' 'Don't be too sure of that,' cried the captain behind him, who at once recognized his pocket-book, but was too late to save it from the flames. 'You thief!' cried the latter, who was enraged at the loss of



the book and the important documents that he knew it contained, 'you have stolen that from me;' and, as the baronet turned round, the men stood face to face, and immediately grappled with each other. Short but desperate was the struggle that took place between them. The passions of both men were instantly aroused to the greatest fury. Sir Bernard, being much the stronger of the two, could have easily shaken off his antagonist, but the tempting demon whispered in his ear: 'Here is your opportunity to get rid of this man, and his power over you for ever. Seize it!' Yielding to the suggestion, he dragged his wretched victim to the edge of the flaming kiln, and making one prodigious effort, hurled him into the fire. Then he stopped for a moment to arrange his torn shirt and coat, looked around to see that he was not observed, and hurried from the spot. He approached the house stealthily, and, without having been seen by any of his domestics, regained his room. The reader knows the rest.

The sudden death of Sir Bernard Carew spoiled Mr. Morton's well-laid schemes, and confounded all his calculations. He was terribly enraged to find that he had lost his prey, and that he had been robbed of his expected golden harvest.

Mr. Stinson was equally disconcerted by that unexpected event, and immediately departed for the United States. He has since returned, bringing with him his daughter and her son. He has commenced proceedings in the law-courts to prove his daughter's marriage with the deceased baronet, and establish her son's claim to the Carew estates as the legitimate heir to the property.

Of the other persons mentioned in our story we have not much to say. The jokers have long since been scattered in every direction, and their place in College knows them no more. Some have gone to the army, others to the church, and others to the bar. Little Kyle is now a curate to his father—a portly arch-deacon in the south.

Mullony has gone to India, being the first on the list of eighty successful candidates for the Indian Civil Service at examinations held at Chelsea Hospital.

Gleeson is aide-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant, and declaims with great vigour against the abolition of the beggarly shams connected with the vice-regal court, which he deems full of majesty.

Mr. and Mrs. Wicks pursue the even tenour of their way, and are even more successful than formerly, in fleecing unfortunate freshmen; the lady has of late taken things exclusively into her own hands, and rather thrown Mr. Wicks into the shade by beating him, and by openly plundering inexperienced 'jibs,' on the proceeds of which she maintains unimpaired the dignity of the great O'Brien family.

Mrs. Williams, with snowy cap and clean white apron, may still be seen making her rounds night and morning, to supply the students with milk. Before leaving College


Lady O'Neill gave her a handsome gratuity in reward for her attendance. Helen has not since forgotten her, but her constant cry is, that since the first day she entered the College walls she never met with such a friend as Mr. Butler.

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A little time has passed. It is a quiet Sabbath morning as Mark Butler walks the fields at The Beeches, at once a proud, a happy, and a thankful man. The fields are waving again with their golden harvests; the cattle are lowing in the pastures; and the fragrant meadows sweetly scent the air, but to Mark 'tis sweeter far to think that the fields are his own; that no grasping agent, no cruel landlord, can disturb him in his possessions, or give him notice to quit his happy home. Mark's home is a happy one. For on Minnie's face he has never seen a frown; and since a little daughter has been born to her, whom they have named Helen, her face has worn one perpetual smile.

Mrs. Butler's hair has grown whiter, and her eyesight is becoming dim. She wipes her spectacles more frequently in order to read Tom's letter, which has just come. Every Sunday morning, she tells Minnie, since Tom went to College, she has had a letter from him. And one lies before her on the open Bible on her knee. As she begins to read it the sound of the church bell strikes her ear, and she pauses a moment to think of the departed, loved ones that lie in the churchyard below.

By-and-by Doctor Young comes in. His step is feebler, his form is thinner, his white locks are scantier, than when we saw him last. He is fast approaching the spirit land, and knows it. The moment he appears little Helen toddles to him, and is soon prattling on his knee. The sound of the child's voice is music to the old man's heart. As Mark looks in through the open window, he hears the doctor telling Helen of the far-off country where the flowers for ever bloom: 'And there shall be no night there, for the Lamb is the light thereof,'




says the doctor gently, as he fondly presses the soft baby cheek to his own:

Larry Doolan has married Peggy Dunne. They are still in Mark's service, and Larry is so well satisfied with things as they are at The Beeches, that he no longer harbours a desire for shooting either landlords or agents.

Tom and Helen have returned from their prolonged tour in the east, and are quietly living at the Abbey. Miss Dillon resides with them, rejoicing in the perfect happiness of her old pupil. O'Neill and his young wife live only a few miles away, and are constant visitors. Doctor Young, too, is an occasional guest, and would come more frequently, he says, only that when he does come, Tom will not let him go away. Mrs. Butler, Mark, and Minnie have just returned from a visit to the Abbey, where they were less delighted by the splendour of Tom's home, than by Tom's old unchanged love and Helen's warm welcome.

The same Sunday morning that we have just spoken of, Helen was bending over a



lovely, crowing baby boy. She looked more beautiful than ever as she shook her hair over the child's face, exclaiming, 'Oh, you darling love! You have your father's grand old eyes. Come, let us go to papa!'

Helen found Tom in his study, and as she placed the rosy cherub in his arms, asked him what he was thinking about?

'I was thinking, my love,' said Tom, 'of the first night I saw you in OLD TRINITY.'

THE END.





